

The Final Battle Against Gog of Magog

Ezekiel, Chapters 38-39

38:1 And YHWH's word came to me, saying: 38:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, set your face towards Gog, land of the Magog, prince, head of Meshek and Thubhal, and prophesy against / concerning him! 38:3 And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me--against you, Gog, prince, head of Meshek and Thubhal! 38:4 And I will turn you back, and I will place hooks in your jaws; and I will bring you out, and all your army--horses and horsemen dressed to perfection, all of them, a great / large assembly (with) large shield and small shield, grasping / wielding swords, all of them. 38:5 Persia, Ethiopia and Put (are) with them, all of them (with) small shield(s) and helmet. 38:6 Gomer and all his bands / armies; House of Togarmah, (from) extreme parts of (the) north, and with all his bands / armies--many people (are) with you. 38:7 Be ready! And keep ready yourself, you, and all your assembly, the ones assembled around you! And you will be a guard for them. 38:8 From / after many days, you will be called into service / mustered. At (the) end of the years, you will come to a land returned from (the) sword, gathered from many peoples upon Israel's mountains, which were a continual waste / desolation. And it (feminine singular) (is) from peoples brought forth--and they live securely, all of them. 38:9 And you will go up like the devastation; you will come like the cloud--to cover the land / earth, you will be, you and all your bands / armies and many peoples with you! 38:10 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: And it will happen in that day, words will come up upon your heart; and you will devise an evil scheme. 38:11 And you will say, I will go up upon a land of open regions / hamlets; I will come (upon) the quiet ones, dwelling securely, all of them dwelling without wall and (gate-) bar(s), and doors / gates they do not have--38:12 to seize spoil, and to carry off plunder; to return your hand upon waste places (now) inhabited, and to / upon a people gathered from (the) nations, doing / working with cattle and acquisitions dwelling upon (the) navel / highest part of the land / earth. 38:13 Shebha and Dhedhan and merchants of Tarshish, and all its young lions / leaders, will say to you, Was it to seize spoil you came? Was it to carry off plunder you assembled your assembly? To take away silver and gold, to take away cattle and acquisitions, to seize great spoil? 38:14 Therefore, prophesy Son of Adam / Humanity! And you shall say to Gog, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Will you not know on the day when My people Israel is dwelling securely? 38:15 And you will come from your place, from extreme parts of (the) north, you and many peoples with you, riding horses all of them, a great assembly, and a numerous army. 38:16 And you will go up, over / against My people Israel, like a cloud to cover the earth / land. In (the) latter part / end of the days it will be. And I will bring you over / against My land, in order that the nations may have knowledge of Me, when I am sanctified by you in their eyes, Gog! 38:17 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Are you he, of whom I spoke in former days, by (the) hand of My servants, Israel's prophets, the ones prophesying in those days / years to bring you over / against them? 38:18 And it will happen on that day, on (the) day of Gog's coming upon Israel's land--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--My wrath with My anger will arise / go up! 38:19 And in My jealousy, with (the) fire of My fury, I have spoken: There will be on that day a great shaking / earthquake upon / in Israel-land! 38:20 And they will quake from before Me--fishes of the sea, and bird(s) of the heavens; and

wild animal(s) of the field, and every creeper that creeps upon the ground; and all the humanity that is upon the surface of the ground. And the mountains will be thrown down, and the steep places will fall; and every wall will fall to the earth. 38:21 And I will call for / summon to all My mountains a sword over / against him--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--it will be a sword of each man against his brother. 38:22 And I will enter into judgment with him, with pestilence and with blood, and overflowing rain and hail-stones. Fire and brimstone I will rain upon him and upon his bands / armies, and upon many peoples, those with him. 38:23 And I will magnify Myself, and I will consecrate / sanctify Myself. And I will be made known to / in (the) eyes of many nations; and they will know that I (am) YHWH! 39:1 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, Prophecy over / against Gog; and you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me --against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Thubhal! 39:2 And I will turn you around, and I will lead you; and I will bring you up from (the) far reaches of (the) north; and I will bring you against Israel's mountains. 39:3 And I will strike your bow from your left hand, and your arrows I will cause to fall from your left hand. 39:4 Upon Israel's mountains you will fall--you! And all your bands / armies, and people who (are) with you, to bird(s) of prey, bird(s) of every wing, and wild animal(s) of the field, I have given you for food / devouring. 39:5 Upon (the) surfaces of the field you will fall--because I, I have spoken--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH! 39:6 And I will throw fire on Magog, and on inhabitants of the islands (living) securely. And they will know that I (am) YHWH! 39:7 And My set-apart name I will make known in (the) midst of My people Israel. And I will not profane (the) name of My set-apartness again; and the nations will know that I (am) YHWH, Set-apart One in Israel! 39:8 Look (it is) coming, and it will be done--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--It (is) the day of which I spoke. 39:9 And those dwelling (in the) cities of Israel will go out, and they will burn, and they will ignite fire in weapon(s) and small shield(s) and large shield(s); in bow(s) and in arrows, and in hand-held club(s) and in spear(s)--and they will burn fire in them (for) seven years! 39:10 And they will not pick up wood / trees from the field, and will not cut down (trees / wood) from the forests; because with (the) weapon(s) they will burn fire. And they will spoil those spoiling them; and they will plunder those plundering them! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 39:11 And it will happen on that day--I will give to Gog a place there--a grave in Israel: (in the) Valley of the Passers-by, east of the (Dead) Sea. And it (is) a muzzle to the passers-by. And they buried Gog there, and all his throng. And they will call (it) Valley of Gog's Throng. 39:12 And (the) house of Israel will bury them, in order to cleanse the land, (for) seven months. 39:13 And all (the) people of the land will bury (them); and it will be for them for a name, (on the) day of My being honored. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 39:14 And men of continuance they will separate--crossing through the land, burying the passers-by, the ones remaining upon (the) surface of the land, to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will search. 39:15 And the crossers-through will cross through in the land; and (one) will see (the) bone of a human; and he will build next to it a sign-post / monument--(to stay there) until the ones burying have buried it, 39:16 And also (it is the) name of a city--Hamonah. And they will cleanse the land. 39:17 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Say to every wing(ed) bird, and to every wild animal of the field, Gather together, and come! Be gathered from (all) around--upon / to My sacrifice which I am sacrificing for you (plural), a great sacrifice upon Israel's mountains, and you (plural) shall eat flesh, and you shall drink blood! 39:18 Flesh of mighty

men / warriors you (plural) shall eat, and blood of princes of the land / earth they shall drink. Rams, battering rams and male goats, young bulls--fat ones of Bashan, all of them. 39:19 And you shall eat fat (meat) to satiety / till you are full, and you shall drink blood to / until drunkenness--from My sacrifice which I sacrificed for you (plural). 39:20 And you will be satisfied / filled upon / at My table--(with) horse(s) and chariot(s), mighty man / men, and every man of war! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 39:21 And I will place My glorious radiance / honor among the nations; and all the nations will see My justice which I have done, and My hand which I have placed among them. 39:22 And Israel's house, they will know that I (am) YHWH, their God, from that day, and forward / in the future. 39:23 And the nations will know that by their iniquity Israel's house went into exile--because they acted faithlessly with Me, and I hid My face from them. And I gave them into (the) hand of their adversaries, and they fell by the sword, all of them! 39:24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions, I did / worked / dealt with them, and I hid My face from them. 39:25 Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Now I will return Jacob's captivity; and I will have compassion upon Israel's house; and I will be zealous / jealous for My set-apart name! 39:26 And they shall take up / carry / forgive their reproach, and all their faithlessness which they practiced against Me, when they dwell upon their ground / land for the security / securely, and there is no one causing fear-- 39:27 when I bring them back from the peoples. And I will gather them from (the) lands of their enemies; and I will be made set-apart by them to / in (the) eyes of the many nations! 39:28 And they will know that I (am) YHWH their God, when I take them into exile to the nations; and I gather them upon their ground; and I will not leave remaining any longer, anyone from them there. 39:29 And I will not again hide My face from them, when I (will have) poured out My Spirit upon Israel's household--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

The Final Battle Against Gog of Magog

Ezekiel 38-39²⁰¹⁴

2014

Matties comments on **38:1-39:29** that “The literary caricatures presented in these chapters are a hinge between the hopeful oracles of **chapters 34-37** and the vision of a renewed temple and land in **chapters 40-48**. Instead of moving from **37:26-28** with its promise of Divine Presence and sanctuary directly to **chapter 40** the plot makes a diversionary turn to anticipate [YHWH's] victory over the forces of violent imperialism and greed that come against those who live in safety...

“Since the chapters assume Israel is restored, living securely in the land (**38:8, 11-12,14**), the intention is to assert in no uncertain terms that restored Israel need not fear. The promise of security in the land (**34:25**) can be trusted. Now that Israel has been restored, none can thwart [YHWH's] sovereign purposes for the people and for the restoration of [YHWH's] reputation...

“That said, however, the mythic and apocalyptic language asserts that no enemy, present or eschatological, can be defeated by human agency, but by [YHWH's] intervention alone (so also the Gog (continued...))

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

motif as it is adapted in **Revelation 19:11-20:10...**

“The chapters each contain four panels concerning Gog: four on Gog’s offensive (**38:2-9, 10-13, 14-16, 17-23**) and four on Gog’s defeat (**39:1-8, 9-10, 11-16, 17-20**), followed by theological conclusions (**39:21-29**.” (P. 1212)

Darr states in an overview of **chapters 38-39** that “With graphic, mysterious, and sometimes gruesome language, Ezekiel describes the battle to end all battles. The opponents will be Yahweh, the Divine Warrior of Israel, Whose just (so Ezekiel) punishment of Judah has damaged Yahweh’s reputation among the nations, and Gog of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, along with the vast horde of his allies. The battle will begin at Yahweh’s initiative (**38:4**); the battleground will be ‘the mountains of Israel’ (**38:8**). The conflagration will occur at some time in the distant future—long after the ingathering and resettlement of Israel’s diaspora, when the people are living securely in their restored homeland. ‘Like a cloud covering the land’ (**38:9, 16**), Gog and his forces will advance against Israel. This will occur, Yahweh declares, ‘so that the nations may know Me, when through you, O Gog, I display My holiness before their eyes (**38:16b**). As this and later verses confirm, the defeat of Gog is not Yahweh’s ultimate goal, but the means by which larger goals of extreme importance within the Ezekielian corpus will be achieved.

“Across the many centuries since its creation, **Ezekiel 38-39** has stirred readers’ imaginations, fantasies, fears, and hopes. It has been reinterpreted by generations, such that the portraits of persons, nations, and forces identified with the mysterious Gog of Magog are numerous indeed. During the centuries and millennia following the passages’s composition, J. Blenkinsopp observes, ‘Gog will be identified successively with Ethiopians (**Sibylline Oracles 3.319, 512**), Goths, the Muslim invaders of Europe, the Mongols, Stalin, Hitler, and so on...The original identity of God of Magog is, to my mind, forever shrouded in mystery...

“The oracle’s two major sections consist of **38:1-23** on the one hand, and **39:1-29** on the other. The first focuses upon Yahweh’s defeat of Gog and his hordes, while the second describes especially the disposition of their corpses...

“[The two chapters consitute] ‘a single powerful proof oracle’...Its intentions are the expression of ‘Yahweh’s determination once and for all to reveal to the nations His holiness, and to His Own people His covenant loyalty’ (Block, **Ezekiel 25-58**, pp. 430-431). A third intention should be added, viz., Yahweh’s determination to restore the Divine reputation among the nations by forcing them to recognize that ‘the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with Me’ (**39: 23-24**). Ultimately ‘the house of Israel,’ and not Yahweh, was responsible for Judah’s collapse and the exiles’ deportation.” (Pp.351, 353)

(continued...)

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

Matties comments on **38:1-9** that “Although Gog may refer to Gyges of Lydia, Gog is likely chosen as a distant and symbolic figure who represents imperial prowess and military alliances. The conflict is clearly between Gog, with his allies, and [YHWH]...

“The text reports a summons to battle. Magog, Meshech, and Tubal (**verse 2**) are mentioned in the table of nations in **Genesis 10:2** (see also **Ezekiel 27:13; 32:26**). In all, seven allies mirror the seven nations in the oracles against the nations (**chapters 25-32**)...

“These peoples from the outer parts of the known world are highly militarized (**verses 4-6**); they set themselves against those who live securely in a land restored from war (**verse 8**; see also **verses 11, 14; 39:26; Leviticus 26:5-6**). Ironically, [YHWH] summons Gog into battle in order to do battle against him.” (P. 1213)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 38** “The Final Deliverance of Israel.” He comments that “This chapter and the next deal with the abortive attack of Gog upon Israel. The preceding chapter closed with the assurance that Israel would be restored finally to the land of his fathers which would become the permanent abode of the Divine Presence. This restoration, however, would not pass unchallenged...

“Formidable armies from the extreme north under the leadership of Gog would invade Israel after his return. But the invasion by Gog and his confederates, which had been predicted by former prophets (compare **verse 17; 39:8**), would end in the utter destruction of their forces...

“No specific date for the coming invasion by Gog is given. The character of the two chapters is apocalyptic and relates to the indefinite future, the advent of the Messiah, indicated by the phrase *the end of days*. After the victory peace and security will be established in Israel for ever, the sovereignty of God reasserted and His holy name sanctified throughout the world.” (P. 253)

No, the restoration of the united people of Israel does not mean that all of Israel's battles will have been fought, or that the Divine purpose in human history is completed with Israel's return to the land. Quite the contrary. Ezekiel looks out into the distant future ("after many days," "in future years"), and envisions great hosts of wickedness gathered against the restored nation, seeking her destruction. There are dark battle-clouds on Israel's distant horizon. Powerful, universal enemies (representing the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth--compare **Genesis 10**) gather together with one purpose in mind--to invade and plunder. But YHWH has quite another purpose in mind--to make himself known both to Israel and to all the nations of the earth! The Day of YHWH with its cosmic phenomena and utter destruction of Israel's enemies--as foretold by earlier prophets in Israel--will surely come to pass! The Divine Warrior will fight on behalf of His restored people, and the universal armies of Israel's enemies will be totally overwhelmed and defeated, to be buried in Israel, making the land into one vast cemetery!

(continued...)

38:1 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר

And YHWH's Word came to me, saying:²⁰¹⁵

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

Reimer comments on **38:1-39:29**, that “These initially obscure chapters, which form a single unit, deliver a powerful assertion of [YHWH’s] sovereignty. The prophet addresses the mysterious Gog, ruler of the equally mysterious Magog...Gog commands his own army and a legion of allies (**38:4-6**). Ezekiel’s oracle pronounces judgment on him for attacking renewed Israel (**38:1-3, 7-13**)...However, there is a power greater than Gog: the sovereign God [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, my Lord YHWH] of Israel reigns over Gog’s plans, which will be used to vindicate [YHWH’s] holiness (**38:14-16**)...

“Gog and his hordes attack, bringing peril to [YHWH’s] people, and convulsions to the natural world. But they meet the wrath of [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, my Lord YHWH], Who vindicates Himself before the nations (**38:17-23**). [YHWH’s] judgment against this latter-day enemy results in Gog’s complete destruction. His army falls (**39:1-6**), an event that galvanizes [YHWH’s] people as they see the greatness of their God [YHWH] (**39:7-8**)...

“So great is the number of the dead, and so complete the victory, that Israel will use the weapons taken from Gog as fuel for seven years (**39:9-10**) and take seven months to cleanse the land of the dead (**39:11-16**)...

“This ‘sacrifice’ will yield a feast for predators (**39:17-20**). No question will remain about the reason for Israel’s earlier exile: the all-powerful [YHWH] withdrew from them because of their treachery, but this final victory displays [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם], YHWH their God’s supremacy (**39:21-24**) and marks the final restoration of His people (**39:25-29**)...

“Sketched thus, the contours of Ezekiel’s prophecy against Gog are clear, but obscurity remains at the level of detail. The structural signals and conclusions often do not coincide. Another problem for interpretation is the shifting viewpoint taken at different points in the oracle (somewhat like the parable of **chapter 17**). As the vantage point shifts from prophet to observer to an overtly theological outlook, so too the reader’s perception of the narrative alters...

“The setting of this oracle in the context of restored Israel remains clear, and theological lessons emerge. The security Israel enjoys is not the result of a lack of threats but of an indissoluble bond between [YHWH] and people. Nor is the presence of threat a sign of [YHWH’s] absence; the human, animal, and natural worlds are all under [YHWH’s] control.” (Pp. 1560-61)

2015

(continued...)

38:2 בֶּן-אָדָם שִׁים פָּנֶיךָ אֶל-גּוֹג

Son of Adam / Humanity, set your face towards Gog,²⁰¹⁶

אֶרֶץ הַמָּגוּג

land of the Magog,²⁰¹⁷

²⁰¹⁵(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-13** “Gog’s Campaign A Providential Act.”

Hilmer comments on **verse 1** that “This statement, repeated often for receiving [YHWH’s] word, stands as an introduction to **chapters 38-39**, which are a unity. The future restoration of Israel under the reign of the house of David (**chapter 37**) will bring about a massive coalition of world powers to destroy [YHWH’s] kingdom. But the vast host that comes against Jerusalem will end up as dead bodies strewn over the fields of the promised land. Palestine will become the cemetery of the enemy hordes (compare **chapters 38-39**).” (P. 1280)

²⁰¹⁶

Hilmer notes that Gog was “apparently a leader or king whose name appears only here [in the **Hebrew Bible**] and [in the **Greek New Testament** at] **Revelation 20:8** [where at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ and his people, Satan is released from prison and will deceive the nations gathered at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to lead them into a totally unsuccessful battle]. Several identifications have been attempted, notably Gyges, king of Lydia (about 660 B.C.E.). Possibly the name is purposely vague, standing for a mysterious, as yet undisclosed enemy of [YHWH’s] people.”

Concerning the phrase “Of the land of Magog,” Hilmer notes that “In **Genesis 10:2** and **1 Chronicles 1:5** Magog is one of the sons of Japheth, thus the name of a people. In **Ezekiel 39:6** it appears to refer to a people. But since the Hebrew prefix *ma-* can mean ‘place of,’ Magog may here simply mean ‘land of Gog.’ Israel had long experienced the hostility of the Hamites and other Semitic peoples; the future coalition here will include—and in fact be led by—peoples descended from Japheth (compare **Genesis 10**).” (P. 1280)

²⁰¹⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The identity of Gog is obscure, and probably he is to be understood not so much as a particular person but rather as an apocalyptic figure. Magog is the designation of the country of Gog. Magog, Meshech and Tubal are mentioned in **Genesis 10:2** among the sons of Japheth...

“In Rabbinic literature Gog and Magog (the latter as an individual) are frequently referred to as the leaders of a hostile army against Israel before the coming of the Messiah. The **Midrash Tanchuma** (continued...)

²⁰¹⁷(...continued)

(**Korach**, end) interprets Gog and Magog to mean the assembly of enemy nations pointing out that the numerical value of the two Hebrew words is seventy, the supposed number of peoples in the ancient world. The **Palestinian Talmud (Megilloth 71b)** identifies Magog with Gothia, the land of the Goths (the reading in the **Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 10a** is ‘Kandia,’ perhaps Crete). Josephus (**Antiquities I, vi. I**)

associates the Magogites with the Scythians, the ancestors of the Gothians who inhabited the region of the Caucasus mountains.” (P. 253)

Reimer comments on the phrase “Gog, of the land of Magog,” that “These two names have been the focus of extensive investigation and speculation in both Jewish and Christian literature, but there is no consensus on their meaning. Some interpreters think ‘Gog’ is a veiled reference to a historical figure, such as Gyges, a seventh century B.C.E. king of Lydia in Asia Minor, in which case the prophecy would be about a future attacker similar to Gyges...

“Others have thought it was a prediction of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.). But elsewhere Ezekiel was willing to make firm identifications or use more obvious symbols, and a connection with Alexander would be anything but obvious...

“Therefore many interpreters understand this passage to be a prophecy concerning an attack against Israel in a more distant future. In Rabbinic literature and the Targums, Gog and Magog are often seen as leaders of a great attack on Israel in a future Messianic age. In particular, Magog is seen as representing the Scythian people (see Josephus, **Jewish Antiquities 1.123**), who ruled vast regions of Asia north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (modern Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan) and who also conquered peoples east and south of the Black Sea (modern Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey)...

“In the **New Testament**, Gog and Magog are the names of the nations led by Satan to attack Jerusalem at the end of the ‘thousand years’ (**Revelation 20:8**)...

Although the other geographical names in this passage can be identified (see notes on **Ezekiel 38:5; 38:6**), ‘Gog’ and ‘Magog’ remain enigmatic, perhaps because the intention of the prophecy is simply to point to a yet-unknown future leader of a great attack against [YHWH’s] people, one whose identity will not be known until the prophecy is fulfilled...

“No time is specified in the prophecy either, except the vague ‘in the latter years’ in **verse 8** and ‘in the latter days’ in **verse 16**.” (P. 1561)

נְשִׂיאַ רֹאֵשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתַבְּחַל

prince, head²⁰¹⁸ of Meshek and Thubhal,²⁰¹⁹

וְהִנְבֵּא עָלָיו:

and prophesy concerning / against him!

38:3 וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH²⁰²⁰ spoke:

2018

English translations commonly have “chief prince”; the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has simply ἄρχοντας, “ruler.” Hilmer says the phrase “chief prince” means “military commander-in-chief. The **New International Version** text note gives the possible translation ‘prince of Rosh,’ and if it is correct, Rosh is probably the name of an unknown people or place. Identification with Russia is unlikely, and in any case cannot be proven.” (P. 1280)

Darr states that “Meshech (Musku) and Tubal (Tabal) are known to us from neo-Assyrian inscriptions. Peoples of Asia Minor, they engaged in ongoing warfare against Assyria. Here, they make their third appearance in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**.” (P. 354) See **27:13** and **32:26-28**.

Darr quotes Block as speculating that “Informed citizens of Judah were probably aware of...peoples in the distant north [who] were shrouded in mystery. The reports of these mysterious people groups that filtered down spoke of wild peoples, brutal and barbaric. This combination of mystery and brutality made Gog and his confederates perfect symbols of the archtypical enemy.” (**Ezekiel 25-58**, p. 436)

“Whatever plans Gog might have harbored for himself will be interrupted when Yahweh turns him around and puts hooks into his jaw...To be hooked in the jaw like an animal by the Divine Hunter is an ominous prospect indeed.” (P. 355)

2019

Hilmer states concerning Meshech and Tubal that “These sons of Japheth (see **Genesis 10:2; 1 Chronicles 1:5**) are probably located in eastern Asia Minor (compare **Ezekiel 27:13; 32:26**). They are people and territories to the north of Israel (compare **verses 6, 15; 39:2**). As in the days of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the major attack will come from the north.” (P. 1280)

2020

For this translation (**Rahlfs**) of יְהוִה אֲדֹנָי, “my Lord YHWH” by κύριος κύριος, “Lord Lord,” see the footnote on **Ezekiel 12:10**.

הַנְּנִי אֵלֶיךָ גֹּג

Look at Me—against you, Gog,

נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מִשְׁכָּךְ וְתֻבְלִי:

prince, head of Meshek and Thubhal!²⁰²¹

38:4 וְשׁוּבְבִתִּיךָ

And I will turn you back,²⁰²²

וְנָתַתִּי חֲחִים בְּלַחְיֶיךָ

and I will place hooks in your jaws,²⁰²³

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתְךָ

and I will bring you out,²⁰²⁴

2021

Reimer notes that “As the **English Standard Version** footnote indicates, an alternative translation of **verse 2** is ‘Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. But no place name ‘Rosh’ can be clearly identified either.) Meshech and Tubal, first named in **Genesis 10:2**, are in Asia Minor (see **Ezekiel 27:13**).” (P. 1561)

2022

Rabbi Fisch comments that this means “God will cause him to be diverted from the goal at which he is aiming.” (P. 253)

Hilmer states that “Emphasis is on the fact that [YHWH] is completely in control of all that is to follow.” (P. 1280)

2023

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Gog and his hosts will be captured by God and led against their will to their doom.” (P. 253)

Hilmer states that “As with Pharaoh in **Ezekiel 29:4**, Gog is likened to a beast led around by [YHWH].” (P. 1280)

2024

Reimer comments on the phrase, “I will bring you out,” that “From the beginning, [YHWH’s] (continued...)

וְאֶת־כָּל־חַיִּלְךָ

and all your army--

סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים

horses and horsemen

לְבָשֵׁי מְכֻלּוֹל׃ כָּלֵם

dressed to perfection,²⁰²⁵ all of them,

קָהָל רָב׃

a great / large assembly

צַנָּה וּמָגֶן

(with) large shield and small shield,

תִּפְּשִׁי חַרְבֹת כָּלֵם׃

grasping / wielding swords, all of them.

38:5 פָּרַס כּוֹשׁ וּפּוּט אִתָּם

Persia, Ethiopia and Put (are) with them,²⁰²⁶

²⁰²⁴(...continued)

initiative in rousing Gog's hordes is apparent.” (P. 1561)

²⁰²⁵

See **Ezekiel 23:12**.

²⁰²⁶

See **Ezekiel 27:10**. Reimer comments on **38:5** that “For Persia (modern Iran), compare **27:10**; Cush is in the region of Ethiopia [**New International** has a footnote stating that Cush / Ethiopia is ‘the upper Nile region’] compare **29:10**); Put is identified with Libya (**27:10; 30:4-5**). Gog’s allies are described in terms analogous to those of Tyre in **27:10**. Together with **38:2, 6**, this passage depicts enemies coming against Israel from all sides; Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah from the north (**verses 2, 6**), and here Persia, Cush, and Put from the south.” (P. 1561)

(continued...)

כָּלֵם מִגֵּן וְכוּבָע:

all of them (with) small shield(s) and helmet.

38:6 גֹּמֶר וְכָל־אֲנָפָיָהּ

Gomer and all his bands / armies;²⁰²⁷

בֵּית תּוֹגְרַמָּה יִרְכָּתִי צָפוֹן

House of Togharmah, (from) extreme parts of (the) north,²⁰²⁸

²⁰²⁶(...continued)

Hilmer says “The invading forces from the north...are joined by armies from the south.” (P. 1280)

Darr comments that the knowledgeable reader “likely would have associated four of Gog’s allies with locales lying north of Israel. The same cannot be said, however, of the three allies identified in **verse 5**—Persia, Cush (Ethiopia), and Put (Libya)...Nothing in the passage thus far has suggested that Gog’s hordes of allies could include only forces from the north. In its present position, **verse 5** brings the number of Gog’s allies to seven, a number symbolizing totality or completeness, and it depicts those allies as coming from both the northern and southern extremities of the known world. Together, these two factors convey to the reader that the future battle will be what we moderns call a world war.” (P. 355)

²⁰²⁷

Rabbi Fisch states that Gomer was “the eldest son of Japheth (**Genesis 10:2**). Some scholars identify Gomer with the Cimmerians, the Greek name for the Armenians. The Targum renders: ‘Garmamia.’ In the Talmudic passages cited on **verse 2** the reading is ‘Germania,’ which has been identified with Kerman in south Persia.” (P. 254)

For the word “bands,” compare **Ezekiel 12:14**.

Reimer states that “Gomer probably refers to the Cimmerians, who had lived north of the Black Sea (modern Ukraine and the southern part of Russia) but were expelled by the conquering Scythians and migrated to an area south of the Black Sea, in Anatolia (modern Turkey).” (P. 1561)

²⁰²⁸

See **Ezekiel 27:14**. Reimer states that “‘The uttermost parts of the north’ seems to refer to enemies that will come from regions to the far north of Israel, without specifically identifying these enemies. This phrase (repeated in **38:15; 39:2**) has led some interpreters to understand this as a prediction of a future attack against Israel by Russia (Russia is the country farthest north of Israel, and
(continued...)

וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲנָפָיו

and with all his bands / armies--

עַמִּים רַבִּים אִתְּךָ:

many people (are) with you.²⁰²⁹

38:7 הֲפֹן וְהִכֵּן לְךָ

Be ready! And keep ready yourself,²⁰³⁰

אַתָּה וְכָל־קְהִלְךָ

you, and all your assembly,

הַנִּקְהָלִים עִיֶיךָ

the ones assembled around you!

²⁰²⁸(...continued)

Moscow is directly north of Jerusalem). But others see it as a general prediction of invaders from the north (see **38:2**)...

“In other places in the **Old Testament**, this phrase describes the place where [YHWH] reigns (**Psalm 48:2**) or where [YHWH] will set His throne (**Isaiah 14:13**), which would suggest a more symbolic interpretation of this oracle.” (P. 1561)

²⁰²⁹

Meaning, with Gog.

²⁰³⁰

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “you be prepared, and prepare for yourself.” He comments that Gog is ironically exhorted to make himself prepared and also to spur on his allies to make themselves ready for the campaign against Israel.” (P. 254)

Darr states that “With **verse 7**, Yahweh summons Gog: ‘Be prepared; get ready’...Despite the urgency of this summons, the battle for which God has conscripted Gog does not lie in the immediate future, but ‘after many days’ and ‘in future years’...Gog will be mustered and brought to a land restored from warfare (literally, ‘a land restored from the sword’) a land whose diaspora has been brought out from many nations to the mountains of Israel (recall **Ezekiel 20:34-42**), land long devastated but now reinhabited (see **Ezekiel 36:33-34**) whose population is living in safety (see **Ezekiel 28:26; 34:25, 27, 28**)...Together, these echoes of Ezekiel’s earlier salvation oracles confirm that such conditions will already pertain before Yahweh’s battle with Gog begins.” (Pp. 355-356)

וְהָיִיתָ לָהֶם לְמִשְׁמָר:

And you will be a guard for them.²⁰³¹

38:8 מִיָּמִים רַבִּים תִּפְקֹד׃

From / after many days, you will be called into service / mustered.²⁰³²

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַשָּׁנִים תָּבוֹא אֶל-אֶרֶץ׃

At (the) end of the years,²⁰³³ you will come to a land

2031

Translations of this line vary:

King James, “and be thou a guard unto them.”

Tanakh, “and hold yourself in reserve for them.”

New Revised Standard, “and hold yourselves in reserve for them.”

New International, “and take command of them.”

New Jerusalem, “and hold yourself at my service.”

Rahlfs, καὶ ἔσῃ μοι εἰς προφυλακὴν, “and you be an outpost for me.”

Rabbi Fisch thinks the translation should be “you be a guard unto them,” i.e., “be the commander of the combined forces.” (P. 254)

2032

Rabbi Fisch’s translation is “After many days you shall be mustered for service.” He comments that “The attack by Gog will take place in the distant future when Israel had been restored and for a time had enjoyed peace and security..”

“Kimchi was apparently aware of the story told in the **Koran (Sura 18)** that Alexander the Great built a wall around Gog and Magog to shut them off from the rest of the world; and he understands the clause to mean that, after having been excluded from the outside world, Gog will make a reappearance upon the stage of history..”

“The gravity of Gog’s crime will lie in the fact that his attack was directed against a land which had been desolated and whose people have been redeemed from the countries of their dispersion.” (P. 254)

2033

Reimer notes that “Locating this episode in the ‘latter years’ [his translation] in the ‘land that is restored’ casts this oracle into the future. See the ‘latter days’ in **verse 16** (and compare **Isaiah 2:2**); thus, it is not necessarily the absolute end of time.” (P. 1561)

(continued...)

מְשׁוּבֵּבֶת מִחֶרֶב

Returned from (the) sword,

מִקְבֻצֹּת מֵעַמִּים רַבִּים

gathered from many peoples

עַל הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

upon Israel's mountains,

אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ לְחֶרֶבָה תָּמִיד

which were a continual waste / desolation.²⁰³⁴

וְהָיָא מֵעַמִּים הוֹצְאָה

And it (feminine singular) (is) from peoples brought forth--²⁰³⁵

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לְבֵטַח כָּלֵם:

and they live securely, all of them.

38:9 וְעָלִיתְ כַּשֹּׂאָה

And you will go up like the devastation;

²⁰³³(...continued)

Hilmer states that “After many days...In future years” means “After all the events of national restoration, the immigration and settlement in Israel as described in **chapters 34-37** will be completed.” (P. 1280)

2034

Rabbi Fisch comments that the literal translation is “a continual waste,” but “*tamid* here signifies ‘for a long time,’ meaning the period of the exile.” (P. 254)

2035

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The subject, which is feminine in the Hebrew, can only refer to *the land*. Ehrlich interprets: ‘so that it was excluded from (no longer reckoned among) the nations,’ and the continuation would then mean: ‘but (the returned exiles), all of them, inhabited (it) in security.’” (Pp. 254-55)

תָּבוֹא כְעָנָן

you will come like the cloud--²⁰³⁶

לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ תִּהְיֶה

to cover the land / earth, you will be,

אַתָּה וְכָל־אֲנָפֶיךָ

you and all your bands / armies

וְעַמִּים רַבִּים אִתְּךָ:

and many peoples with you!

38:10²⁰³⁷

2036

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrases *like a storm* and *like a cloud* are “a figure for the strength and terrifying appearance of Gog’s approaching armies.” (P. 255) Compare **Jeremiah 4:13**, which is descriptive of the approaching Babylonian armies in Jeremiah’s day:

הִנֵּה! כְּעָנָנִים יַעֲלֶה

Look! It comes up like the clouds,

וְכִסּוּפָה מְרַכְבּוֹתָיו

and like the whirlwind, its chariots--

קָלוּ מִנְּשָׂרִים סוּסָיו

swifter than vultures / eagles, its horses!

אֵוִי לָנוּ כִּי שָׁדַדְנוּ:

Woe to us, because we were ruined!

2037

Reimer comments on **38:10-13** that “The clear insistence that Gog remains firmly under Yahweh’s control and, in fact, acts at Yahweh’s behest (**verses 4, 16**), does not preclude Gog from forming plans to plunder the now-fertile land of restored Israel (‘the quiet people who dwell securely,’ **verse 11**) and being held responsible for those plans.” (P. 1562)

Matties states that “This panel reports Gog’s own intentions, focused by the rhetorical questions of **verse 13**, in which the greedy desires of others correspond to those of Gog...The meaning of *center of the earth* in **verse 12b** is elusive. Either Israel is depicted as living in the midst of the nations (see also **5:5**) or as being at the cosmic center of the earth. The expression used here is found again only in
(continued...)

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

And it will happen in that day,²⁰³⁸

יַעֲלוּ דְבָרִים עַל-לִבְכֶּךָ

words will come up upon your heart,²⁰³⁹

²⁰³⁷(...continued)

Judges 9:37 where it designates the important city, Shechem, an earlier central locality for Israel.” (P. 1213)

Darr comments that “To this point in the oracle, Gog’s future attack against the mountains of Israel has been ascribed solely to Yahweh’s initiative. Israel’s own God will drag him to its restored homeland. No charges have been lodged against God. In verses 10-13, however, Gog and his followers are said to be motivated by greed.” (P. 356)

²⁰³⁸

Rabbi Fisch states that “in that day” means “At the time when Israel is again settled in his land.” (P. 255) Hilmer notes that this is a phrase common to other prophetic writings, but found only here in Ezekiel. It refers to the day of Gog’s invasion of Israel.” (P. 1280)

Darr comments that “‘On that day’ when Gog advances upon the land at Yahweh’s initiative, he will discover that its inhabitants are living in villages without benefit of protective walls, bars, or gates (compare **Ezekiel 36:35**). In short, Gog will survey easy prey. In his mind he will devise an ‘evil scheme,’ for the peaceful people who are dwelling securely in the center of the earth—they will have spoil to seize and plunder to carry off. Gog apparently is encouraged to act on his evil scheme by merchants from Sheba and Dedan and from Tarshish (each a trading partner of Tyre, see **Ezekiel 27**)...These merchants hope to profit from the spoils of war.” (P. 356)

²⁰³⁹

Hilmer’s translation has “thoughts will come into your mind,” and he comments that “The Divine initiative (**verse 4**) is paralleled, as it often is in Scripture, by human action (compare **Deuteronomy 31:3; Isaiah 10:6-7**).” (P. 1280)

וְחִשְׁבֶתָּ מַחֲשֵׁבֶת רָעָה:

and you will devise an evil scheme.²⁰⁴⁰

38:11 וְאָמַרְתָּ

And you will say,

אֵעֲלֶה עַל־אֶרֶץ פְּרוּזוֹת

I will go up upon a land of open regions / hamlets;

אָבוֹא הַשְּׁקֵטִים יֹשְׁבֵי לְבַטָּח

I will come (upon) the quiet ones, dwelling securely,

כֻּלָּם יֹשְׁבִים בְּאֵין חוֹמָה וּבְרֵיחַ

all of them dwelling without wall and (gate-) bar(s),²⁰⁴¹

2040

Rabbi Fisch comments that the *evil scheme* is “the invasion of the land of Israel.” (P. 255)

2041

Himmler’s translation has “land of unwalled villages,” and he comments that the text “speaks of a blissfully peaceful, ideal future time when walls no longer will be needed. See **Zechariah 2:4-5**, which assumes as does this passage, that [YHWH] alone is sufficient protection (compare **Ezekiel 36:35-36**).” (P. 1280)

Zechariah 2:8^{Heb} / **2:4**^{Eng}

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רִץ דַּבֵּר אֶל־הַנְּעָר הַלֵּז לֵאמֹר

And he said to him, Run, speak to this youth, saying,

פְּרוּזוֹת תֵּשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם מְרֹב אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה בְּתוֹכָהּ:

Jerusalem shall dwell (as) open regions, because of the multitude of human(s) and cattle in its midst!

2:9^{Heb} / **2:5**^{Eng}

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לָּהּ

And I, I will be for it—

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH—

חוֹמַת אֵשׁ סָבִיב

a wall of fire all around,

(continued...)

וּדְלָתִים אֵין לָהֶם:

and doors / gates they do not have--²⁰⁴²

38:12 לְשָׁלַל שָׁלַל

to seize spoil,

²⁰⁴¹(...continued)

וּלְכָבוֹד אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ:

and I will be for glory in its midst!

Ezekiel 36:35-36

35 וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַלְזוּ הַנְּשֻׁמָּה

And they will say, The land--this one, that was desolated,

הָיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן

became like a garden of Eden / delight!

וְהָעָרִים הַחֲרָבוֹת וְהַנְּשֻׁמוֹת וְהַנְּהָרְסוֹת

And the wasted and the desolated, and the thrown down cities--

בְּצוּרוֹת יִשְׁבוּ:

made inaccessible / fortified shall be inhabited!

36 וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַרוּ סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם

And the nations that are left remaining, surrounding you, shall know

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בָּנִיתִי הַנְּהָרְסוֹת

that I, YHWH, rebuilt the thrown down;

נִטְעַמְתִּי הַנְּשֻׁמָּה

I re-planted the desolated!

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי

I YHWH, I said (it),

וְעָשִׂיתִי:

and I will do (it)!

²⁰⁴²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In the condition of peace and feeling secure, Israel will have made no preparations against attack by building walls around his cities. The defenseless state of the land will be an incentive to Gog to make it the object of his campaign.” (P. 255)

וּלְכֹז בָּז

and to carry off plunder;

לְהָשִׁיב יָדְךָ עַל-חֲרָבוֹת נֹשְׁבֹת

to return your hand²⁰⁴³ upon waste places (now) inhabited,

וְאֶל-עַם מְאַסָּף מִגּוֹיִם

and to / upon a people gathered from (the) nations,

עֹשֶׂה מְקַנָּה וְקַנְיָן

doing / working with cattle and acquisitions

יֹשֵׁב עַל-טֶבֶר הָאָרֶץ:

dwelling upon (the) navel / highest part of the land / earth.²⁰⁴⁴

2043

Rabbi Fisch states that “to turn you hand against” is “an idiom indicating ‘to take strong measures against.’” (P. 255) Compare **Isaiah 1:25**.

2044

Rabbi Fisch states that the literal translation is “in the navel of the earth.” He adds that “The phrase occurs again in **Judges 9:37**. The land of Israel was considered to be geographically the center of the world as the navel is in the center of the body (compare **Ezekiel 5:5**)...This is mentioned to stress the viciousness of Gog’s plan. He dwelt in the far north, a great distance from the land of Israel; so the people of [Israel] could have had no aggressive designs upon him.” (P. 255)

Hilmer states that “The Hebrew for ‘center’ [טֶבֶר, **tabbur**] also means ‘navel’ [he fails to mention the meaning ‘highest part’] a graphic image for the belief that Israel was the vital link between [YHWH] and the world (the idea occurs also in **5:5**). The word occurs elsewhere in the **Bible** only in **Judges 9:37**. Since the Hebrew for ‘land’ can also mean ‘earth,’ theologically Jerusalem is both the center of the land of Israel and the center of the earth.” (P. 1280)

We think not. Such an important theological idea would be fleshed out much more than these brief, incidental references, which are not theological statements. If the Jews really held to such a view, it would be found in such passages as **Genesis 1** or **1 Kings 8**, etc., and Israel / Jerusalem would be mentioned in **Genesis 10** as the navel / center of the earth—instead, neither are even mentioned there. Theologically, Jerusalem is only the center of the earth as it is raised up above the hills to become a

(continued...)

38:13 שְׁבָא וְדִדָּן וְסַחְרֵי תַרְשִׁישׁ

Shebha²⁰⁴⁵ and Dhedhan and merchants of Tarshish,²⁰⁴⁶

וְכָל־כַּפְרֵיהָ

and all its young lions / leaders,²⁰⁴⁷

יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ

will say to you,

הֲלִשְׁלַלְתָּ שָׁלַל אֶתְּהָ בָּא

Was it to seize spoil you came?

הֲלִבְזוּ בְּזוּ הַקְּתַלְתָּ קְהֵלְךָ

Was it to carry off plunder you assembled your assembly?

לְשַׂאתָ | כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב

To take away silver and gold,

²⁰⁴⁴(...continued)

“heavenly Zion / Jerusalem,” into which all peoples and nations can come to learn from Yahweh—see **Isaiah 2** and the ensuing development of “Zion.”

²⁰⁴⁵

Hilmer comment that Sheba was located in the “southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula (modern Yemen), known for trading (**Job 6:19**; see **Ezekiel 23:42; 27:22; 1 Kings 10:1-2**).” (P. 1280) For Dedan, see **Ezekiel 25:13**; for Tarshish, see **Ezekiel 27:12**.

²⁰⁴⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments: “For these nations and the special articles of their trading, see **Ezekiel 27:12, 15, 22**. They hoped to derive personal gain by purchasing the goods plundered by Gog’s armies.” (Pp. 255-56)

²⁰⁴⁷

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “the magnates thereof.” He states that this is literally “the lions thereof,” and comments that this is “a figure for the leading merchants.” (P. 256)

לְקַחַת מִקְנֵה וּקְנִיָּין

to take away cattle and acquisitions,

לְשַׁלֵּל שְׁלָל גָּדוֹל:

to seize great spoil?

38:14²⁰⁴⁸ לָכֵן הִנְבֵּא בֶן-אָדָם

Therefore,²⁰⁴⁹ prophesy Son of Adam / Humanity!

וְאָמַרְתָּ לְגוֹג

And you shall say to Gog,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הֲלוֹא בַיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּשֵׁבֶת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבִטָּח תִּדְעֶ:

Will you not on the day when My people Israel is dwelling securely, know?²⁰⁵⁰

38:15 וּבָאתָ מִמִּקְוֶיךָ

And you will come from your place,

2048

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 14-23** “Destruction of Gog’s Hordes.”

Matties comments on **verses 14-16** that “[YHWH] announces to Gog that Gog’s military advance from the remote north against *My people Israel* is done at [YHWH’s] Own initiative (**verse 16**) so as to display the Divine character among the nations.” (P. 1213)

2049

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Such being the design of Gog, the prophet is commanded to tell him that, far from succeeding, his attack will be an occasion when [YHWH’s] name will be sanctified by his defeat.” (P. 256)

2050

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The state of Israel’s peace and confidence which has led to his unpreparedness, so that you will choose him for your victim.” (P. 256)

מִיִּרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן

from extreme parts of (the) north,

אַתָּה וְעַמִּים רַבִּים אִתְּךָ

you and many peoples with you,

רֹכְבֵי סוּסִים כְּלָם

riding horses all of them,

קָהָל גָּדוֹל וְחֵיל רַב:

a great assembly, and a numerous army.

38:16 וְעָלִיתָ עַל־עַמֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you will go up, over / against My people Israel,

כַּעֲנַן לְכֶסֶת הָאָרֶץ

like a cloud to cover the earth / land.²⁰⁵¹

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים תְּהִיָּה

In (the) latter part / end of the days it will be.

וְהֵבֵאתִיךָ עַל־אֶרְצִי

And I will bring you over / against My land,²⁰⁵²

2051

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “as a cloud” that it means like a cloud “which covers the earth with gloom; so will Gog invade with a vast army which covers a wide battle-area.” (P. 256)

Reimer comments that “The vastness of Gog’s hordes that come against Israel is a theme repeated throughout these chapters. Once again, [YHWH’s] sovereignty over Gog’s actions is asserted (‘I will bring you’), as Gog is a tool used to vindicate [YHWH’s] holiness. In this, Gog evokes Pharaoh in the exodus narratives (see **Exodus 7:3-5; 14:4**).” (P. 1562)

2052

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as asking, “How can it be just that God should Himself lead the barbarians to a crime for which He destroys them? To the Hebrews, God is the ultimate cause of all
(continued...)

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֹתִי

in order that the nations may have knowledge of Me,

בְּהִקְדָּשִׁי בְּךָ לְעֵינֵיהֶם גּוֹג:

when I am sanctified by you in their eyes, Gog!²⁰⁵³

38:17²⁰⁵⁴

²⁰⁵²(...continued)

things; if the savage comes, God must have brought him; if he is destroyed, God must have planned to destroy him.” Rabbi Fisch adds, “Though the purpose of Gog’s campaign is said to be lust for destruction and spoil, it is an act designed in [YHWH’s] wisdom to bring mankind to the realization that He is King of the universe.” (P. 258)

²⁰⁵³

Darr comments that “Because the covenant between Yahweh and Israel has been restored, Gog’s scheme is doomed to failure. Why, then, will God turn him around, hook him through his jaws, and impel him toward Israel’s homeland? **Verse 6b** provides the first answer to this question. ‘In the latter days’ (literally, ‘at the end of days’), Yahweh will bring Gog against the land of Israel in order that the nations may know—that is, recognize and acknowledge—God’s unparalleled sovereignty and power. Gog is God’s instrument—the means by which the Lord’s holiness will be displayed in the nations’ sight. Universal recognition of Yahweh’s Supreme and Unrivaled Deity is a major concern of the Ezekielian tradition...Looking toward the future, this passage anticipates the demonstration of Yahweh’s holiness by means of the defeat of Gog, the fiercest of foes, and his hordes.” (P. 357)

²⁰⁵⁴

Reimer notes that “The **Septuagint** [Rahlfs] understands this sentence as an assertion rather than a question (though the Hebrew is more naturally a question). Either way, it probably relates to the mysterious ‘foe from the north’ tradition linked especially to Jeremiah.” (P. 1562) See:

Jeremiah 4:6,

שָׂאוּ־נֶס צִיּוֹן

Raise a flag towards Zion!

הָעִיזוּ

Bring to safety!

אַל־תַּעֲמִדוּ

Don’t stand still!

כִּי רָעָה אֲנֹכִי מִבְּיָא מִצָּפוֹן

Because I am bringing evil from (the) north,

(continued...)

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הֲאֵתָה־הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתִּי בְיָמַימ קְדָמוֹנִים

Are you he, of whom I spoke in former days,²⁰⁵⁵

²⁰⁵⁴(...continued)

וְשָׁבַר גְּדוֹל:

and great destruction!

Jeremiah 6:22,

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

הִנֵּה עַם בָּא מִמְּאֲרֵץ צָפוֹן

Look—a people is coming from north-land;

וְגוֹי גְּדוֹל יַעֲוֹר מִיַּרְכְּתֵי־אָרֶץ:

and a great nation will be roused from extreme parts of earth.

Matties comments on **verses 17-23** that “This panel begins with a rhetorical question that expects a negative answer. Gog is not [YHWH’s] instrument of judgment. Borrowing the language of **Genesis 1** and of storm Theophany, the entire creation will be affected by the conflict (**verses 19-20, 22**; see also **Habakkuk 3; Psalm 68:7-10**). [YHWH] calls for the sword against Gog—seven agents of judgment in all—yet the aggressors will also draw swords against one another (**verses 21-22**). Israel has no part in the conflict even though the arena is ‘My mountains’ (see also **Isaiah 14:25; Zechariah 14:5**). [YHWH] alone will do battle, so that [YHWH] alone will be revealed among the nations (**verse 23**).” (Pp. 1213-14)

²⁰⁵⁵

Darr comments that “According to the Masoretic Hebrew text, Yahweh’s address to Gog takes the form of a question: ‘Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?’ (NRSV)...Because Yahweh presumably would not ask such a question of Gog in order actually to secure information, the query should be regarded as a rhetorical question...In the **Septuagint**, by contrast, there is no question. Yahweh’s words to Gog are cast as an indicative sentence: ‘You are he of whom I spoke.’” (P. 357)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As Gog’s invasion had been predicted long ago although his name had not been specified, [YHWH] now identifies him with the man spoken of in the prophecies.” (P. 257)

(continued...)

בְּיַד עֲבָדַי נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

by (the) hand of My servants, Israel's prophets,²⁰⁵⁶

הַנְּבִאִים בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם שָׁנִים

the ones prophesying in those²⁰⁵⁷ days / years²⁰⁵⁸

²⁰⁵⁵(...continued)

Hilmer states that this is “probably a general reference to earlier prophecies of Divine judgment on the nations arrayed against [YHWH] and His people.” (P. 1281)

Darr asks, “Of what prophecies would he think as he considered Ezekiel’s reference to the oracles of former days? Scholars point often to **Isaiah 14:24-25**, where Yahweh swears to defeat ‘the ‘Assyrian’ on the mountains of Israel...and **Isaiah 14:31** (where the Assyrian army is described metaphorically as smoke coming out of the north), as well as Jeremiah’s ‘foe from the north’ passages in **1:13-15; 4:5-18** and **6:22**. Of course, Gog is neither an Assyrian nor a Babylonian. For that reason, both Block and Odell conclude that the proper answer to the rhetorical question is ‘no.’ Isaiah was not prophesying concerning Gog, and Jeremiah eventually identified his foe from the north as Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonians...

“I conclude that **verse 17** intends that Yahweh’s query links Gog with the prophecies of other prophets who spoke of a foe from the north...Israel’s prophets had proclaimed that God used the ‘foe from the north’ as an instrument by which Yahweh punished the Israelites for a variety of sins. Ezekiel, who consistently maintained in his oracles of judgment that Yahweh was using Nebuchadrezzar in just that way, now looks forward to Yahweh’s future, consummate victory of the ultimate foe from the north. God brings Gog and his forces against Israel’s land, not as an instrument for its destruction, but for the occasion of Gog’s destruction. Never again will God’s people, living securely in their land and incapable of incurring Yahweh’s wrath (**36:26-27**) and consequent punishment, fear such a foe.” (P. 358)

²⁰⁵⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The reference cannot be to Zechariah who was later than Ezekiel, and **chapter 14** of his Scroll may be dependent upon this chapter. The allusion may be to **Zephaniah** (compare his **chapter 1** [we see nothing in **Zephaniah 1** concerning an unnamed individual attacker]), **Jeremiah** (compare **4:5-7** [perhaps, with its mention of ‘a destroyer of nations’]) and possibly other predictions which are not recorded.” (P. 257)

²⁰⁵⁷

(continued...)

לְהַבִּיא אֶתְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם:

to bring you over / against them?

38:18²⁰⁵⁹ וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

And it will happen on that day,

בַּיּוֹם בּוֹא גּוֹג עַל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל

on (the) day of Gog's coming upon Israel's land--

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

תֵּעָלֶה חֲמָתִי בְּאַפִּי:

My wrath with My anger will arise / go up!²⁰⁶⁰

²⁰⁵⁷(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch's translation interpolates the word "many" in this text, but it is not found in either the Hebrew or the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**).

2058

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) interpolates the conjunction "and" before the noun "years."

2059

Darr comments that "**Verses 18-23** describe, in graphic and terrifying detail, the effects on nature of Yahweh's battle with Gog." (P. 357) She adds that "With **verse 18**, the Divine speech shifts from second-person direct address to Gog to third-person indirect address about Gog..

"The ancient reader knows that precedents exist for this type of imagery [terrifying earthquakes] in earlier prophecies; see, e.g., **Jeremiah 4:23-26**, which speaks of a horrific earthquake shaking the mountains as creation teeters on the edge of returning to primordial chaos. On the day—the day that Gog comes to the land of Israel—Yahweh declares, God's wrath will be aroused against him. The different terms used to describe God's passionate outburst have appeared earlier in the corpus, but here they are piled, one after the other, in a manner unparalleled within Ezekiel and possibly the entire **Hebrew Scriptures**." (P. 358)

2060

(continued...)

²⁰⁶⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that this “denotes the Divine anger manifesting itself as a destructive force.” (P. 257) Compare **Deuteronomy 32:22** and **Psalms 18:9**.

2061

Reimer comments on **38:19-20** that “Upheavals in nature, reflecting the cosmic outpouring of [YHWH’s] wrath, consequently affects [YHWH’s] Own people. Such phenomena are also part of Jeremiah’s vision of the future.” (P. 1562) Compare **Jeremiah 4:23-26**:

23 רָאִיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

I saw the earth / land,

וְהִנֵּה־תְהוֹ וּבְהוֹ

and look–formlessness and emptiness / a chaotic mess!

וְאֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם

And to the heavens,

וְאֵין אֹרֶם:

and their light was not! (A reversal of creation—see **Genesis 1**)

24 רָאִיתִי הַהָרִים

I saw the mountains,

וְהִנֵּה רַעֲשִׁים

and look–quaking / shaking!

וְכָל־הַגְּבָעוֹת הִתְקַלְקְלוּ:

And all the hills were shaking themselves!

25 רָאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה

I saw, and look–

אֵין הָאָדָם

the human being was not!

וְכָל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

And every bird of the heavens--

נָדְדוּ:

they fled!

26 רָאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה

I saw, and look–

הַכַּרְמֶל הַמִּדְבָּר

the Carmel—the wilderness / desert! (Mount Carmel was on the edge of the most beautiful, productive land in Israel—but now, in Ezekiel’s vision, a wilderness / desert!)

(continued...)

וּבְקִנְיָתִי בְּאֵשׁ-עֲבָרְתִּי דִבַּרְתִּי

And in My jealousy,²⁰⁶² with (the) fire of My fury, I have spoken:

אִם-לֹא בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה

There will be on that day

רָעַשׁ גָּדוֹל עַל אֲדַמַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

a great shaking / earthquake upon / in Israel-land!²⁰⁶³

38:20 וְרָעְשׂוּ מִפְּנֵי

And they will quake from before Me--

דְּגַי הַיָּם וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

fishes of the sea, and bird(s) of the heavens;

²⁰⁶¹(...continued)

וְכָל-עָרָיו נִתְּצוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה

And all its cities were pulled down from before YHWH,

מִפְּנֵי חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:

from before His anger's burning!

2062

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “in My jealousy,” that “This translation of the term [קִנְיָה, **qin)ah**] in connection with God is inadequate and misleading. The proper meaning of the word is ‘vindication.’ When man outrages His moral law, He is roused to action with the purpose of vindicating it.” (P. 257)

2063

Rabbi Fisch comments that “If an earthquake is intended, such a phenomenon is often part of an apocalyptic outlook. Rashi explains it of lightning and thunder.” (P. 257)

And we wonder what Rabbi Fisch means by “an apocalyptic [i.e., ‘unveiling’] outlook”?

Hilmer says the earthquake signals “the mighty Presence of [YHWH], Who comes to overwhelm the great army invading His land.” (P. 1281)

וְחַיֵּית הַשָּׂדֵה וְכָל־הַרֹמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ

and wild animal(s) of the field, and every creeper that creeps upon the ground,²⁰⁶⁴

וְכָל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ

and all the humanity that is upon the surface of the ground.²⁰⁶⁵

וְנִהְרְסוּ הַהָרִים וְנִפְּלוּ הַמְּדֻרְגּוֹת

And the mountains will be thrown down, and the steep places will fall;

וְכָל־חוֹמָה לָאָרֶץ תִּפּוֹל:

and every wall will fall to the earth.

38:21 וְקָרָאתִי עֲלָיו לְכָל־הָרֵי הָרֶב

And I will call for / summon to all My mountains²⁰⁶⁶ a sword²⁰⁶⁷ over / against him--

2064

Hilmer comments that “The fourfold listing of the animal world indicates the totality of nature (see **Ezekiel 1:5**; compare **Genesis 9:2**; **1 Kings 4:33** and **Job 12:7-8** for similar listings.” (P. 1281)

Darr comments that “A mighty earthquake will shake the land of Israel and all of its living creatures. The list of animals shaken by the quake occasioned by Yahweh’s Theophany—the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the animals of the field, and all creeping things that creep on the ground, as well as all human beings—recalls the language of...**Genesis 1**. So severe will that earthquake be that the mountains and their cliffs, symbols of stability, will be thrown down; and every wall constructed by human hands will crash to the ground.” (Pp. 358-359)

2065

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Universal panic will be caused by [YHWH’s] manifestation in behalf of Israel.” (P. 257)

2066

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The enemy is represented as having overrun the holy land.” (P. 258)

2067

Hilmer states that this sword is “[YHWH’s] sword of judgment (**Isaiah 34:5-6**; **Jeremiah 25:29**).” (P. 1281)
Isaiah 34:5-6,

(continued...)

2067 (...continued)

5 פִּי־רִוּתָּהּ בְּשָׁמַיִם חָרְבִי
Because My sword drank to its full in the heavens.
הִנֵּה עַל־אֲדוֹם תִּרְד
Look-over Edom it will go down,

וְעַל־עַם חֲרָמִי לְמִשְׁפָּט:
and upon a people devoted by Me for judgment.

6 חָרֵב לַיהוָה
A sword belongs to the YHWH-

מִלְאָה דָם
it was full of blood,

הִדְשָׁנָה מִחֶלֶב
it was made fat from (their) fat,

מִדָּם כְּרִים וְעִתּוּדִים
from blood of lambs and he-goats,

מִחֶלֶב כְּלֵי־אֵילִים
from fat of rams' kidneys.

כִּי זִבַּח לַיהוָה בְּבִצְרָה
Because a sacrifice belongs to YHWH in Botsrah,
וְטִבַּח גָּדוֹל בְּאֶרֶץ אֲדוֹם:
and a great slaughtering in the land of Edom.

Jeremiah 25:29,

כִּי הִנֵּה בְעִיר אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא־שְׁמִי עָלֶיהָ
Because look-in the city over which My name was called,

אֲנִכִּי מִחֵל לְהָרַע
I am beginning to bring harm.

וְאַתֶּם הַנִּקְיָה תִנְקוּ
And you (plural), shall you be declared innocent?

לֹא תִנְקוּ
You will not be innocent!

כִּי חָרֵב אֲנִי קוֹרֵא עַל־כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
Because I am calling (for) a sword over all inhabitants of the land!

נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
(It is) a saying of YHWH of Armies!

(continued...)

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו תִּהְיֶה:

it will be a sword of each man against his brother.²⁰⁶⁸

38:22²⁰⁶⁹ וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי אִתּוֹ

And I will enter into judgment with him,²⁰⁷⁰

בַּדָּבָר וּבַדָּמ

with pestilence and with blood,

²⁰⁶⁷(...continued)

Darr comments that “Yahweh will summon the sword against Gog throughout God’s mountains. Panic-stricken, Gog’s hordes will turn their swords against each other (as did the Midianites in their battle with Gideon, **Judges 7:22**). The text preoccupies them with self-destruction, and so need say nothing about the possibility of Israel’s inhabitants being slaughtered. This war is between Yahweh on the one hand, and Gog and his army on the other. The author affords the Israelites no role in the former’s victory and the latter’s defeat.” (P. 359)

2068

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In the panic created by [YHWH’s] presence, the heathen hordes will not distinguish between friend and foe but wildly strike with their swords, killing one another. This happened in the past (compare **Judges 7:22; 1 Samuel 14:20**).” (P. 258)

Hilmer comments that “The coalition of Israel’s enemies will turn on itself, as did the armies that attacked Judah in the time of Jehoshaphat (**2 Chronicles 20:22-23**).” (P. 1281)

2069

Reimer comments on **38:22-23** that “This battle is [YHWH’s]. So too the greatness belongs to Him alone.” (P. 1562)

2070

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “I will plead against him,” and he comments that “By exercising His judgment upon Gog, God will demonstrate his guilt.” (P. 258)

וַיִּשַׁם שׁוֹטֵף וְאֲבָנֵי אֶלְגָּבִישׁ

and overflowing rain and hail-stones.²⁰⁷¹

אֵשׁ וְנִפְרִית אֲמַטִּיר עָלָיו וְעַל-אַנְפָּיו

Fire and brimstone I will rain upon him and upon his bands / armies,²⁰⁷²

וְעַל-עַמִּים רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

and upon many peoples, those with him.

38:23 וְהִתְגַּדַּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדַּשְׁתִּי

And I will magnify Myself, and I will consecrate / sanctify Myself.

וְנִודַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם רַבִּים

And I will be made known to / in (the) eyes of many nations;

וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and they will know that I (am) YHWH!²⁰⁷³

2071

See **Ezekiel 13:11, 13**.

Darr comments that “Among Yahweh’s arsenal of weapons are pestilence and bloodshed...Moreover, God will punish Gog and his vast forces with torrential floods and hailstones, and with fire and sulfur (recall the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in **Genesis 19:24**). By these means, Yahweh engages in a great Self-disclosure: God’s greatness and holiness are revealed in the eyes of the many nations which witness that ‘battle to end all battles.’ As a consequence, they are forced to acknowledge Yahweh.” (P. 359)

2072

Hilmer comments that “The list of Divine weapons suggests that [YHWH] will intervene directly without the benefit of an earthly army.” (P. 1281)

2073

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Demonstration of [YHWH’s] omnipotence and His deliverance of Israel will bring about universal recognition of His sovereignty.” (P. 258)

(continued...)

39:1²⁰⁷⁴ וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם׃

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

הִנְבֵּא עַל-גּוֹג׃

Prophesy over / against Gog;

וְאָמַרְתָּ כֵּן אָמַר יְהוָה׃

and you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

²⁰⁷³(...continued)

Darr adds that “With the destruction of this, the ultimate ‘foe from the north,’ Yahweh reassures God’s people that they need not fear that some further, future foe will swoop down upon them. Both Assyria and Babylonia were foes from the north, instruments of Yahweh’s judgment upon the Northern and Southern Kingdoms respectively. But under the conditions described by Ezekiel, including new hearts and spirits that are incapable of disobedience (36:26-27), Israel will not again sin against its God. No future judgment will ever be needed.” (P. 359) We understand how Darr has arrived at this conclusion, but do not see the text making this conclusion explicit. What do you think?

2074

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 39** “The Fate of Gog’s Hordes.” He comments that “The prophet proceeds to give a more detailed and vivid account of the disaster which is to befall Gog’s armies. So vast will be the multitudes of the enemy that the wood from his weapons will serve the Israelites as fuel for seven years, and it will take them seven months to bury his dead. Birds and beasts are to enjoy a great feast, devouring the flesh of the mighty and drinking the blood of the princes...

“After reiterating the wholesome effect which the annihilation of Gog’s followers will have upon Israel and upon mankind in general, Ezekiel declares in a final, triumphant oracle that the restoration of Israel, confirmed by the destruction of his enemies, will be complete and his regeneration lasting, for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel.” (Pp. 258-59)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-10** “The Annihilation of Gog.” Matties states that **verses 1-8** depict the defeat of Gog, “beginning with echoes of 38:2-3.” (P. 1214)

Reimer comments on **verses 1-6** that “[YHWH’s] opposition to Gog is reiterated as the invasion of Israel proceeds, only for Gog’s army to fall solely by the hand of [YHWH]...On Meshech and Tubal, see 38:2. On ‘uttermost parts’ see 38:6.” (P. 1562)

הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ גּוֹג

Look at Me—against you, Gog,²⁰⁷⁵

נָשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מִשֶּׁךְ וְתֻבְחַל:

chief prince of Meshek and Thubhal!²⁰⁷⁶

39:2²⁰⁷⁷ וְשִׁבַּבְתִּיךָ וְשִׂשְׂאֲתִיךָ

And I will turn you around,²⁰⁷⁸ and I will lead you;²⁰⁷⁹

2075

Compare **Ezekiel 38:3**.

Darr notes that “Unlike **38:1**, **39:1** makes no reference to Magog and does not include the command that Ezekiel set his face against God’s foe.” (P. 359)

2076

See **38:2** with its footnote.

2077

Matties comments on **39:2-3** that “Ironically, in the light of the blessings on the *mountains of Israel* in **36:1-15**, [YHWH] will bring Gog against those very mountains (**verse 2**). But the assault never materializes; [YHWH] strikes the weapons out of his hands (**verse 3**). The defeat recalls [YHWH’s] destruction of warfare and weapons depicted in **Psalms 46:8-9**.” (P. 1214)

2078

See **Ezekiel 38:4** for this rare verb.

Darr states that Israel’s Divine Warrior will turn Gog around (**verse 2**), drive him forward, bring him up from the remotest stretches of the north, and lead him against the mountains of Israel.” (P. 359)

2079

This verb, שִׁשְׂאֲתִיךָ, **shishe)thiyka**, occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and therefore its meaning is only a matter of conjecture.

Translations of this line vary:

King James, “And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee”;

Tanakh, “I will turn you around and drive you on”;

New Revised Standard, “I will turn you around and drive you forward”;

(continued...)

וְהֵעֲלִיתִיךָ מִיַּרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן

and I will bring you up²⁰⁸⁰ from (the) far reaches of (the) north,²⁰⁸¹

וְהִבֵּאתִיךָ עַל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

and I will bring you against Israel's mountains.²⁰⁸²

39:3²⁰⁸³ וְהִכִּיתִי קִשְׁתְּךָ מִיַּד שְׂמֹאלְךָ

And I will strike your bow from your left hand,²⁰⁸⁴

וְחִצֶּיךָ מִיַּד יְמִינְךָ אֲפִיל:

and your arrows I will cause to fall from your left hand.

²⁰⁷⁹(...continued)

New International, “I will turn you around and drag you along”;

New Jerusalem, “I shall turn you about, lead you on”;

Rahlfs, καὶ ἰσχυρὰ σε καὶ καθοδηγήσω σε, “and I will gather you and I will lead you.”

2080

See **Ezekiel 38:16**.

2081

For this mention of the far north, see **Ezekiel 38:6** and **15**.

2082

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as writing: “Most invaders would be content with ravaging the plains; this horde leaves no hilly spot untouched.” (P. 259) See **Ezekiel 38:21**.

2083

Darr states that “**Verse 3** offers only the briefest description of their clash: Yahweh will knock Gog's bow from his left hand and cause his arrows to fall from his right hand. Defenseless, Gog will fall upon the mountains of Israel, along with all his troops and accompanying peoples (see **38:9**.” (P. 359)

2084

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The skill in archery which distinguished the foe would be of no avail with God as Israel's Ally; compare then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations (**Zechariah 14:3**.” (P. 259)

Hilmer comments that “[YHWH] will disarm Israel's enemies before they can shoot an arrow.” (P. 1281)

39:4²⁰⁸⁵ ׁ על־הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפּוֹל אֶתָּה

Upon Israel's mountains you will fall--you!

וְכָל־אֲנָפִיךָ וְעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתָּךְ

And all your bands / armies, and people who (are) with you.

לְעֵיט צִפּוֹר כָּל־כַּנְף

To bird(s) of prey, bird(s) of every wing,

וְחַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

and wild animal(s) of the field,

נִתַּתִּיךָ לְאֹכְלָהּ:

I have given you for food / devouring.²⁰⁸⁶

39:5 עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה תִּפּוֹל

Upon (the) surfaces of the field you will fall--

2085

Matties comments on **39:4-6** that “Gog’s fall resembles the death of Pharaoh (**29:5; 32:4**). Perhaps Tyre and other coastal allies are included in the judgment (see also **25:15, 18; 27:3**). Judgment by fire is indicated in Amos’s oracles against the nations (**Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 2:5**).” (P. 1214)

2086

Hilmer notes that the dead bodies being “food to all kinds of carrion birds” is “a theme expanded upon in **verses 17-20** [of this chapter].” (P. 1281) Yes, indeed!

Darr comments that “God will give the carcasses of Gog and his hordes to every kind of scavenging bird—vultures, eagles, ravens, etc.—and to the wild animals (literally ‘creatures of the field’)—lions, jackals, hyenas, etc. When they have done their work, only the bones will remain, like the bones strewn across the valley in Ezekiel’s vision in **chapter 37**. But Yahweh will not be content simply to defeat Gog and his forces and then to abandon their remains to scavengers. According to **verse 6**, Yahweh will send fire (shades of Sodom and Gomorrah!) on Magog, Gog’s domain, and on the inhabitants of the coastlands, the shores and islands of the Mediterranean Sea...Now, Yahweh will assault with fire those subjects of Gog who believe themselves to be out of harm’s way.” (Pp. 359-360)

כִּי אֲנִי דִבַּרְתִּי

because I, I have spoken--

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַבְּרָה יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

39:6 וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אֵשׁ בְּמָגוּג

And I will throw fire on Magog,²⁰⁸⁷

וּבְיֹשְׁבֵי הָאֲיִלִּים לְבֶטַח

and on inhabitants of the islands (living) securely.

וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH!

39:7²⁰⁸⁸ וְאֶת־שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי אֹדְיֵעַ בְּתוֹךְ עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And My set-apart Name I will make known in (the) midst of My people Israel.

2087

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Not only will the invaders be slain in the land of Israel, but the countries from which they came will also suffer at [YHWH’s] hand.” (P. 259)

For this matter of YHWH sending fire, see **Ezekiel 30:8**.

2088

Reimer comments on **39:7-8** that “This brief passage asserting the devotion for the holy [YHWH] by His Own people is introduced at this point as the obvious peril implied in **verses 2-5** draws attention to the Israelites themselves. It also forges a link with **21:7**, where the words of **29:8** were applied to Judah and Jerusalem. The fall of Gog’s hordes is as certain as Jerusalem’s was.” (P. 1562)

Matties comments on **verses 7-8** that “The recognition of [YHWH] in **verse 6b** is developed by a double highlighting of the holy character (name; see also **20:39; 36:20-23**), and use of the *Holy One*, a name common throughout **Isaiah** (e.g., **Isaiah 1:4; 5:19; 10:17; 12:6; 43:3; 55:5; 60:9, 14**). This day of judgment (**verse 8**) is the time of [YHWH’s] inter-vention (not a reference to **38:17**).” (P. 1214)

וְלֹא־אֶחַל אֶת־שֵׁם־קְדְשִׁי עוֹד

And I will not profane (the) Name of My set-apartness again;²⁰⁸⁹

וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And the nations will know that I (am) YHWH,

קְדוֹשׁ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Set-apart One in Israel!²⁰⁹⁰

39:8 הִנֵּה בָּאָה וְנִהְיֶתָה

Look (it is) coming, and it will be done--²⁰⁹¹

נֵאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

הוּא הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי:

2089

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The dispersion of Israel and his subsequent sufferings led to the profanation of [YHWH’s] holy name, because they were interpreted by heathen nations as due to His inability to protect His people.” (P. 260)

2090

Rabbi Fisch states, “That the Divine Presence abides in the midst of Israel will then become evident to those nations who had placed so false a construction upon His people’s exile.” (P. 260)

Darr comments that “With this final battle, the Lord’s Own people will come to full awareness of the nature of their unrivaled Patron Deity...God will never again allow God’s holy Name to be profaned. The reader recognizes in Gog’s future defeat the resolution of a problem that has plagued the prophet: the profanation of God’s holy Name as a consequence of the exile.” (P. 360)

2091

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The catastrophe upon God is so certain that it is as good as accomplished.” (P. 260)

It (is) the day of which I spoke.²⁰⁹²

39:9²⁰⁹³

2092

Darr comments that “The day of Yahweh’s defeat of Gog, about which God has spoken through Ezekiel, will be the ultimate ‘Day of the Lord.’” (P. 360)

2093

Matties comments on **39:9-10** that “[YHWH] alone has defeated Gog, so the people of Israel need only to clean up. Burning seven types of weapons for seven years symbolizes the end of warfare (see also **Psalm 46:9-10**^{Heb} / **8-9**^{Eng},

9 / 8 לְכוּ-חִזּוּ מַפְעָלוֹת יְהוָה

Come! See some of YHWH’s works,

אֲשֶׁר-רָשָׂם שָׁמוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ;

Who has placed horrors in the earth!

10 / 9 מִשְׁבִּית מִלְחָמוֹת עַד-קֵצָה הָאָרֶץ

Who causes wars to cease as far as the earth’s end;

קִשְׁתַּת יִשְׁבֵּר וְקִצֵּץ חֲנִית

He will break (the) bow, and He will cut off (the) spear;

עֲגָלוֹת יִשְׂרָף בְּאֵשׁ;

He will burn war-wagons in the fire!

Isaiah 9:4^{Heb} / **5**^{Eng}

כִּי כָל-סֹאֵן סָאֵן בְּרָעַשׁ

Because every boot trampling with tumult,

וְשִׁמְלָה מִגּוֹלְלָה בְּדָמִים

and (every) uniform rolled in blood—

וְהָיְתָה לְשָׂרֵפָה

and it will be for burning,

מֵאֲכָלֶת אֵשׁ;

eaten (by) fire.

Darr comments that “With **verse 9**, the scene shifts from Yahweh’s deadly battle with Gog to its aftermath. The Israelites, making their first appearance in the oracle, will go forth from their cities, collect the weapons of Gog and his hordes, and burn them. Six types of weapons are enumerated: small shields (‘bucklers’) and body shields; bows and arrows; javelins and spears. So numerous will these weapons be that they will fuel Israel’s fires for seven years, alleviating the necessity of gathering wood from the land’s fields and forests.” (P. 360)

וַיֵּצְאוּ יְשִׁבְיָא עָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And those dwelling (in the) cities of Israel will go out,²⁰⁹⁴

וּבְעֵרוּ וְהִשִּׁיקוּ בְנֹשֶׁק

and they will burn, and they will ignite fire in weapon(s)

וּמִגֶּן וְצִנָּה

and small shield(s) and large shield(s);

בְּקִשְׁתִּים וּבַחֲצִיִּים

in / with bow(s) and in / with arrows,

וּבַמַּקֵּל יָד וּבַרִמָּח

and in / with hand-held club(s) and in / with spear(s)--

וּבְעֵרוּ בָהֶם אֵשׁ

and they will burn fire in / with them

שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים:

(for) seven years!²⁰⁹⁵

2094

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The inhabitants of the land of Israel, who hitherto had not left their homes to meet Gog in battle, will now come out to gather the wooden parts of the weapons for fuel. It is to be noted that in the state of security assured by God, the weapons themselves serve no useful purpose and are not gathered and stored for a future war.” (P. 260)

2095

That’s a lot of weapons—enough to keep fires burning for seven years!

Reimer states that “The seven years of fuel provided by the abandoned weapons of the enemy corresponds to the ‘seven months’ of burial in **verse 14**. The number seven is also deliberately employed in the collection of oracles against foreign nations.” (Pp. 1562-63)

Hilmer states that here the number seven is “a symbolic number signifying the finality of this great battle against [YHWH’s] people, as well as indicating the size of the invading armies.” (P. 1281) That’s an unbelievably large mountain of weapons—that take seven years to burn up!

39:10 וְלֹא־יִשְׂאוּ עֵצִים מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה

And they will not pick up wood / trees from the field,

וְלֹא יַחַטְּבוּ מִן־הַיְעָרִים

and will not cut down (trees / wood) from the forests;

כִּי בַנֶּשֶׁק יִבְעֲרוּ־אֵשׁ

because with (the) weapon(s) they will burn fire.²⁰⁹⁶

וְשָׁלְלוּ אֶת־שְׁלֵיהֶם

And they will spoil those spoiling them;

וּבְזָזוּ אֶת־בְּזֹזֵיהֶם

and they will plunder those plundering them!

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

39:11²⁰⁹⁷ וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא

And it will happen on that day--

2096

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They will have no need to fetch wood from the field or forest during the seven years.” (P. 260)

2097

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 11-16** “Burial of the Slain and Cleansing of the Land.”

Matties comments on these verses that “The burial of Gog and his horde takes seven months, symbolizing the thorough cleansing required to prepare for [YHWH’s] return (**verses 12, 16**). The place of burial remains unknown, although Hamon-Gog and Hamonah are symbolic names (horde, pride) which retain all of the pomp associated with militaristic imperialism.” (P. 1214)

Darr states that “**Verses 11-16** describe the meticulous collection of the physical remains of Gog and his allies and the burial of those remains in Israel...’On that day’—at a time in the future, perhaps on the same day that Gog attacks (**38:18**)—Yahweh will allocate a burial site for Gog and his hordes (**verse 1**). The location of that site has vexed scholars” with a number of different sites being proposed, none of them convincing. (P. 361)

אֶתֶּן לְגֹג מְקוֹם־שָׁם קֶבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

I will give to Gog a place there—a grave in Israel:

גֵּי הַעֲבָרִים

(in the) Valley of the Passers-by,²⁰⁹⁸

קִרְמַת הַיָּם

east of the (Dead) Sea.²⁰⁹⁹

וְחִסְמַת הִיא אֶת־הַעֲבָרִים

And it (is) a muzzle to the passers-by.²¹⁰⁰

וְקָבְרוּ שָׁם אֶת־גֹּג וְאֶת־כָּל־הַמוֹנֵה

And they buried Gog there, and all his throng.

2098

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "the valley of them that pass through." He comments: "That is, the valley through which one passes to the east of the sea, viz. The Dead Sea..."

"An alternative explanation given by Davidson is: 'The expression is probably a proper name; the 'valley of the passers through' which may have been so named as the usual route of communication between the east and west of the sea.'" (P. 261)

2099

And we wonder, Is there such a valley on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, a "Valley of the Passers-by"? Or is this a valley seen in Ezekiel's vision, that is non-existent in reality? Is it the Valley of the Arnon, which travelers have to by-pass, swerving to the east, to the area beyond the valley?

2100

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "It shall stop them that pass through." He comments that "The valley where the slain are to be buried is the thoroughfare for traffic between east and west, but it will be blocked by the multitude of dead bodies (Rashi). The rendering...'it shall stop the (noses of) the passengers,' because of the stench, is based on Kimchi." (P. 261)

וְקָרְאוּ גֵיא הַמּוֹן גּוֹג:

And they will call (it) Valley of Gog's Throng.²¹⁰¹

39:12 וּקְבְרוּם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

And (the) house of Israel will bury them,

לְמַעַן טַהַר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

in order to cleanse the land,²¹⁰²

שִׁבְעָה חֳדָשִׁים:

(for) seven months.²¹⁰³

2101

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of **verse 11** is quite different from the Hebrew text:

καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ

And it will happen in that day--

δώσω τῷ Γωγ τόπον ὀνομαστόν μνημεῖον ἐν Ἰσραὴλ

I will give to the Gog a famous place, a tomb in Israel--

τὸ πολυάνδριον τῶν ἐπελθόντων πρὸς τῇ θαλάσῃ

The One Full of Men, of those arriving at the sea--

καὶ περιουικοδομήσουσιν τὸ περιστόμιον τῆς φάραγγος

and they will build around the edge of the ravine,

καὶ κατορύξουσιν ἐκεῖ τὸν Γωγ

and they will bury the Gog in the earth there,

καὶ πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος αὐτοῦ

and all the multitude of his.

καὶ κληθήσεται τὸ γαι τὸ πολυάνδριον τοῦ Γωγ

And the valley [transliteration of Hebrew noun גַּי] will be called The One Full of Men of the Gog.

We think the Greek translation may well be thinking of the Valley of the Arnon as the burial place for Gog's hosts.

2102

Hilmer comments that “Ritual purity is a basic element in Ezekiel’s [priestly] theology (see **22:26; 24:13; 36:25, 33; 37:23**). Corpses were especially unclean (see **Leviticus 5:2; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Numbers 5:2; 6:6-12; 19:16; 31:19**).” (P. 1281)

2103

(continued...)

39:13 וְקָבְרוּ כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ

And all (the) people of the land²¹⁰⁴ will bury (them);²¹⁰⁵

וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְשֵׁם

and it will be for them for a name,

יוֹם הַכְּבוֹדִי

(on the) day of My being honored.

נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

²¹⁰³(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “An unburied corpse is a reproach to God and causes defilement of the land (compare **Deuteronomy 21:23**). Therefore Israel will have to bury the slain to cleanse the land. There will be so many that the task will last seven months.” (P. 261)

Darr states that “A full seven months will be required in order for the house of Israel, all the people of the land, to bury the dead in order cultically to purify the terrain...But Ezekiel the priest says nothing about the contamination incurred by the people during their seven-month stint; his focus remains fixed upon the land...Scrupulously burying the enemy testifies to Israel’s passion for the land’s purity and its newfound security that rests in God.” (P. 362)

2104

Hilmer notes that for this phrase, “people of the land,” to see **Ezekiel 7:27**, “though here a special class [of people] may not be implied.” (P. 1282) We agree, and think that here all the people of the land of Israel are meant.

2105

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The whole population of Israel will take part in the burial of their enemies, and their act of honoring these dead will bring them renown among the nations (Rashi). The renown will be due to the vast number of the slain as proved by the length of time the burial took (Metsudath David). The latter explanation fits in better with the continuation: the greatness of Israel’s victory will bring honor to [YHWH’s] name.” (P. 261)

39:14²¹⁰⁶ וְאֲנָשֵׁי תְמִיד יִבְדְּלוּ

And men of continuance they will separate—²¹⁰⁷

עֹבְרִים בְּאֶרֶץ מְקַבְּרִים אֶת־הָעֹבְרִים

crossing through the land, burying the passers-by,

אֶת־הַנּוֹתְרִים עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ

the ones remaining upon (the) surface of the land,²¹⁰⁸

לְטַהֲרָהּ

to cleanse it.

2106

Darr comments that “**Verses 14-16** elaborate upon the importance of purifying the land after the defeat of Gog. Even the scrupulous efforts of the land’s population over a seven-month period will not suffice to insure that no remains of Gog and his hordes are overlooked. Hence, further steps must be taken. With priestly precision, the author tells how the people will establish a standing commission of men, passers-through who for seven (additional) months will traverse the land and bury any ‘passers-on’ (i.e., the dead) they discover. **Verse 15** provides greater detail about this operation. The passers-through will comb the land, and if they spot a human bone, they will place a marker beside it. A second group, called the buriers, will follow behind them and, seeing these markers, will bury the remains in the Valley of Hamon-gog.” (P. 362)

2107

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “they shall set apart men of continual employment.” He comments that “After seven months, during which the corpses found will have been buried, men are to be appointed to do nothing else but search throughout the land for any body or bones which were not detected.” (P. 261)

Hilmer likewise states that “After the seven-month burial period observed by all the people, special squads will be hired full time to ensure total cleansing of the land—by marking for burial any human bones that may have been missed. Total ritual purity is the aim.” (P. 1282)

2108

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The appointed men will bury the remains they find with the assistance of passers-by. What is meant by this verse is explained in the next verse.” (Pp. 261-62)

מִקְצֵה שִׁבְעַת-חֳדָשִׁים יִחְקְרוּ:

At the end of seven months they will search.

39:15 וְעָבְרוּ הָעֹבְרִים בְּאֶרֶץ

And the crossers-through will cross through in the land,²¹⁰⁹

וְרָאָה עֵצֶם אָדָם

and (one) will see (the) bone of a human;

וּבִנָּה אֶצְלוֹ צִיּוֹן

and he will build next to it a sign-post / monument--²¹¹⁰

עַד קִבְרוּ אֹתוֹ הַמְּקַבְּרִים

(to stay there) until the ones burying have buried it

אֶל-גֵּיא הַמּוֹן גּוֹג:

to / in (the) Valley of Hamon Gog.

39:16²¹¹¹ וְגַם שֵׁם-עִיר הַמוֹנָה

And also (it is the) name of a city–Hamonah.²¹¹²

2109

Rabbi Fisch explains that “This refers to wayfarers who, if they saw a human bone, would mark the spot by a sign, so that the employed men may notice it and remove it for burial in the valley of Hamon-Gog.” (P. 262)

2110

Hilmer’s translation has “marker,” and he comments that it was “probably of stone, either a large one or a heap of smaller ones.” (P. 1282)

2111

Darr states flatly that “**Verse 16** is, at best, an enigma.” (P. 362) And we say, Is that a surprise? Those who have taken **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12** seriously will expect to find puzzles / enigmas in the texts of prophets and apostles! And they will not be disappointed!

2112

(continued...)

וְטִהַרְוּ הָאָרֶץ:

And they will cleanse the land.²¹¹³

39:17²¹¹⁴

²¹¹²(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "Hamonah shall also be the name of a city." He quotes Davidson as writing, "A city shall also be built in commemoration of Gog's overthrow; naturally the city must be supposed situated near the valley of Hamon-Gog, because its name Hamonah (multitude), if the city were situated elsewhere, would not of itself suggest any connection with Gog." (P. 262)

2113

Rabbi Fisch comments that "This concluding clause provides the reason for the great care taken to remove the corpses and name the city after the vast burial-place. The city would help to cleanse the land, because it would serve as a reminder to keep away from the defiled area." (P. 262)

2114

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 17-24** "The Victory Feast and Vindication of [YHWH's] Judgment."

Reimer comments on **verses 17-20** that "This grisly scene represents the wholesale inversion [turning upside-down] of what sacrifice intends, but [YHWH] has inverted it. The slain of Gog's army are carrion for scavengers, a banquet celebrating condemnation. In John's vision of the end in **Revelation 19:17-21**, he sees an angel using this language and this imagery." (P. 1563)

- 17 Καὶ εἶδον ἓνα ἄγγελον ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ
And I saw one angel / messenger standing in the sun,
καὶ ἔκραξεν [ἐν] φωνῇ μεγάλῃ
and it cried out [with] a great voice
λέγων πᾶσιν τοῖς ὀρνέοις τοῖς πετομένοις ἐν μεσουρανήματι·
saying to all the birds the ones flying in mid-heaven,
Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ
Come, gather for the great supper of the God,
- 18 ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων
so that you (plural) may eat (the) flesh(es) of kings,
καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων
and flesh(es) of captains,
καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν
and flesh(es) of mighty men,
καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ' αὐτῶν
and flesh(es) of horses and of the ones seated upon them,

(continued...)

²¹¹⁴(...continued)

καὶ σάρκας πάντων

and fleshes of all,

ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων

both free and slaves,

καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων.

and small ones and great ones.

19 Καὶ εἶδον τὸ θηρίον

And I saw the beast

καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς

and the kings of the earth

καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτῶν

and the armies of theirs,

συνηγμένα ποιῆσαι τὸν πόλεμον

gathered to make the war

μετὰ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου

with the one sitting upon the horse,

καὶ μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος αὐτοῦ.

and with the army of his.

20 καὶ ἐπιάσθη τὸ θηρίον

And the beast was taken firm hold of,

καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης

and with it the false prophet,

ὁ ποιήσας τὰ σημεῖα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ,

the one doing / making the signs before it [the beast],

ἐν οἷς ἐπλάνησεν τοὺς λαβόντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου

by which he deceived those having received the mark of the beast

καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ·

and the ones worshiping its image.

ζῶντες ἐβλήθησαν οἱ δύο εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς

Alive, the two were thrown into the lake of the fire

τῆς καιομένης ἐν θείῳ.

that burns with sulfur.

21 καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ

And the rest were killed by the sword

τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου

of the one sitting upon the horse

τῇ ἐξελεύσῃ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ,

that came out from the mouth of him,

(continued...)

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

כֹּה-אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

אָמַר לְצִפּוֹר כָּל-כַּנָּף

Say to every wing(ed) bird,

וּלְכָל | חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

and to every wild animal of the field,

הַקְּבֹצוּ וּבֵאוּ

Gather together, and come!

הֵאָסְפוּ מִסְבִּיב

Be gathered from (all) around--

²¹¹⁴(...continued)

καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα ἐχορτάσθησαν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῶν.
and all the birds ate to the full out of their flesh.

Matties comments on **verses 17-20** that “The final shocking caricature is an invitation to a feast (see also **39:4**). [YHWH] is the Host, unclean carnivorous animals and birds are the guests, and the enemy is the victim in this sacrificial feast (see also **Isaiah 34:6-8; Zephaniah 1:7**). People were not to consume fat or blood; these were reserved for [YHWH] (**Leviticus 3:16-17**). The menu includes military personnel and the ruling class. The sacrificial character of the feast announces the end of warfare and of those who threaten the purposes of [YHWH].” (P. 1215)

Darr comments that here, “Yahweh issues an invitation to scavenging birds and carnivorous beasts to be God’s guests at a grisly sacrificial feast at the Lord’s table on the mountains of Israel...It is difficult to imagine that the ancient reader would not have experienced some surprise that, after reading of the deaths and meticulous burials of Gog and his army, he would suddenly encounter a scenario in which their flesh and blood are the makings of a great banquet.” (P. 363)

עַל־זִבְחֵי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לָכֶם

upon / to My sacrifice²¹¹⁵ which I am sacrificing for you (plural),

זִבְחַ גְּדֹלַעַל הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

a great sacrifice upon Israel's mountains,

וְאִכַּלְתֶּם בָּשָׂר

and you (plural) shall eat flesh,

וְשָׁתִיתֶם דָּם:

and you shall drink blood!²¹¹⁶

2115

Rabbi Fisch comments that the two ideas of feast and sacrifice “are interconnected, since one was usually the occasion of the other. ‘To an Israelite, the sacrifice here described is a grim parody of the true sacrifice, since the ‘guests’ drink the blood, a rite absolutely forbidden in Israel’ (Lofthouse).” (P. 262)

2116

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The food and drink for the feast will consist of the dead bodies of Gog’s warriors. The celebration to which the birds and beasts are invited would, of course, take place before the corpses were interred, although their ultimate burial has already been recorded.” (Pp. 262-63)

Hilmer notes this fact, and comments that “Various interpretations are:

1. Since the enemies are all dead and buried, this section (**verses 17-20**) is perhaps to be understood as poetic imagery.
2. However, if the passage refers back to **verse 4**, a more literal interpretation is possible—the dead bodies were not all buried at once.
3. **Verses 17-20** involve a restating of **verses 9-16**, employing a different figure (see **Isaiah 34:6; Jeremiah 46:10; Zephaniah 1:7**). The metaphor of sacrifice suggests a consecration to Yahweh in judgment, as with Jericho (see **Joshua 6:17** and **New International Version** text note).” (P. 1282)

39:18 בֶּשֶׂר גְּבוּרִים תֹּאכְלוּ

Flesh of mighty men / warriors you (plural) shall eat,²¹¹⁷

וְדַם־נְשִׂאֵי הָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁתּוּ

and blood of princes of the land / earth they shall drink.

אֵילִים כְּרִים וְעִתּוּדִים פְּרִים

Rams, battering rams and male goats, young bulls--²¹¹⁸

מְרִיאֵי בָשָׁן כָּלָם:

fat ones of Bashan, all of them.²¹¹⁹

2117

Hilmer comments that this is “a gory description of what birds of prey [such as griffon-vultures] commonly do.” (P. 1282) See **Revelation 19:17-20**, quoted in footnote 2022.

2118

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The animals enumerated are those which were brought upon the sacrificial altar, and are used as a figure for the leading men (compare **Isaiah 34:6-8; Jeremiah 51:40**).” (P. 263)

Hilmer likewise states that “The bodies of the victims are compared to animals commonly used for sacrifices. His translation, the **New International Version**, interpolates the phrase “as if they were” at the beginning of this line, with no indication that is an interpolation. We think this is a form of dishonesty in translation. If the text doesn’t say what you think it should say, just change the text! And this, by a group of scholars who belittle so-called “liberals” for changing the text of the **Bible!** We say, No, don’t change the text—whether for “liberal” purposes or “conservative” purposes!

2119

Rabbi Fisch notes that Bashan was “in Transjordan, famous for its breeds of cattle (compare **Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 22:13**).” (P. 263)

Hilmer likewise comments that Bashan is “Rich pastureland east of the Sea of Galilee, known for its sleek cattle (**Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 22:12; Amos 4:1**) and its oak trees (**Ezekiel 27:6; Isaiah 2:13**).” (P. 1282)

39:19 וְאָכַלְתֶּם־חֶלֶב לְשַׂבְעָה

And you shall eat fat (meat) to satiety / till you are full,²¹²⁰

וּשְׁתִּיתֶם דָּם לְשִׁכְרוֹן

and you shall drink blood to / until drunkenness--²¹²¹

מִזְבְּחִי אֲשֶׁר־זָבַחְתִּי לָכֶם:

from My sacrifice which I sacrificed for you (plural).²¹²²

39:20 וְשָׂבַעְתֶּם עַל־שֻׁלְחָנִי

And you will be satisfied / filled upon / at My table--²¹²³

2120

Rabbi Fisch reminds the readers that “The invited birds and beasts are still being addressed.” (P. 263)

2121

Hilmer states that the eating fat and drinking blood are “further indication that this is [YHWH’s] sacrificial feast, in that fat and blood were normally reserved for [YHWH] (see **Ezekiel 44:15** and **Leviticus 3:17**).” (P. 1282)

Darr comments that “In **verse 19**, Yahweh is said to promise those invited to the sacrificial meal at the Lord’s table that they will gorge on fat until thoroughly sated and drink blood until thoroughly drunk.” (P. 363)

2122

Darr comments on the two-fold use of the root *zabach* (‘sacrifice’) in this verse that “These verses brim with irony. The *zebach* feast is all but turned on its head. Instead of worshipers bringing an animal to be sacrificed and consumed in Yahweh’s Presence, Yahweh brings together ravaging birds and beasts to feast upon human flesh, blood, and fat. In conventional *zebach* feasts, the blood and fat are reserved for Yahweh (placed upon the altar; see **Leviticus 3:16-17**). Here, God offers these most holy portions to unclean living creatures.” (P. 363)

2123

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “My table,” that it means “God being the ‘Host’ at the feast.” (P. 263)

(continued...)

סוֹס וְרֶכֶב גְּבוּר וְכָל-אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה

(with) horse(s) and chariot(s), mighty man / men, and every man of war!

נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

39:21²¹²⁴ וְנִתַּתִּי אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי בְּגוֹיִם

And I will place My Glorious Radiance / Honor among the nations;²¹²⁵

²¹²³(...continued)

Hilmer states that “My table” means the “sacrificial altar.” He adds, “See **Ezekiel 40:38-43** and **41:22** for description of the tables in the new temple.” (P. 1282)

2124

Reimer comments on **39:21-24** with its phrase “all the nations shall see My judgment,” that “This absolute, unanswerable demonstration of [YHWH’s] power serves as vindication before the nations. It also puts Israel’s exile into proper perspective. Their expulsion from their land was not because their God [YHWH] was incapable of preserving them. On the contrary, their treachery compelled [YHWH] to hide His face (**verses 23, 24**; compare **verse 29**) from them, leaving them to the fate they deserved for their iniquity of turning against [YHWH].” Compare **Deuteronomy 31:18**,

וְאֲנֹכִי הַסְתֵּיר אֶפְנֵי בְּיוֹם הַהוּא

And I, I will certainly hide My face in that day,

עַל כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

because of all the evil which it did,

כִּי פָנָה אֶל־אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים:

because it turned to other Gods.

Matties comments on verses **21-24** that they “look back on Israel’s wrongdoing and judgment (**verses 23-24**) after a transition that identifies the nations as observers of Divine glory, justice, and power (**verse 21**), and Israel as participant in knowledge of [YHWH] (**verse 22**). The eschatological dimension of the conflict with Gog is brought into the moment when Israel acknowledges [YHWH’s] sovereignty, *from that day forward* (**verse 22b**). Israel’s experience of Divine abandonment is depicted as [YHWH’s] hidden face (see also **8:12**; **9:9**; **Deuteronomy 31:16-18**; **Psalms 13:1**; **44:24**; **88:14**).” (P. 1214)

2125

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The overthrow of Gog’s formidable force will be acknowledged to be a Divine act.” (P. 263)

(continued...)

וְרָאוּ כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטִי אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי

and all the nations will see My Justice which I have done,²¹²⁶

וְאֶת-יָדִי אֲשֶׁר-שָׂמֵתִי בָהֶם:

and My Hand which I have placed among them.

39:22 וַיֵּדְעוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

And Israel's house, they will know²¹²⁷

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

That I (am) YHWH, their God,

מִן-הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָלְאָה:

from that day, and forward / into the future.²¹²⁸

²¹²⁵(...continued)

We think much more than that is involved in this statement, that YHWH's Glorious Radiance will be placed among the nations--בְּגוֹיִם אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי בְּנִיחֵם, "and I will place My *kabodh* / Glorious Radiance in / among the non-Jews / nations." What Ezekiel had seen in his initial vision, the presence of YHWH's glorious radiance in Babylon--a vision that radically transformed his life--is going to be present among the non-Jewish nations of the earth--so that all humanity can see that vision, and experience its life-transforming power, even if they have to see the vision in the midst of war and destruction!

2126

Darr comments that "Witnessing Yahweh's defeat of Gog and his hordes...the nations will look back to events lying in the past and reinterpret them in a way that exonerates Yahweh's damaged reputation...The Glory of the Lord, first revealed to Ezekiel in a vision as he stood beside the Chebar Canal, will be displayed for all eyes to see in the light of God's great victory." (P. 364)

2127

Rabbi Fisch comments that "The miraculous deliverance will also confirm Israel's faith and confidence in God." (P. 263)

2128

Darr states that "Verse 22 affirms that one of the foremost objectives in the Ezekelian tradition will be fully and forever realized. Henceforth, the house of Israel will know that Yahweh is their God. The nations, too, will be instructed by God's victory over Gog. In the past, they had speculated that
(continued...)

39:23 וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם

And the nations will know²¹²⁹

כִּי בַעֲוֹנָם גָּלוּ בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל

that by their iniquity Israel's house went into exile--

עַל אֲשֶׁר מָעְלוּ־בִי

because they acted faithlessly with Me,

וְאַסְתֵּר פָּנַי מֵהֵם

and I hid My face from them.²¹³⁰

וְאַתָּנֶם בְּיַד צָרֵיהֶם

And I gave / placed them into (the) hand of their adversaries,

וַיִּפְּלוּ בַחֶרֶב כָּלֵם:

and they fell by the sword, all of them!²¹³¹

²¹²⁸(...continued)

defeat and exile befell Yahweh's people because their Patron Deity was incapable of protecting them. Seeing God's triumph, however, they will realize that Israel's captivity was a consequence not of Divine impotence, but of human sinfulness (**verse 23**).” (P. 264)

2129

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The manifestation of [YHWH's] omnipotence in the defeat of Gog and His intervention on behalf of His people will prove to the nations that Israel's suffering in exile was not due to His inability to save him but to his sin.” (P. 263)

2130

Hilmer notes that YHWH's hiding His face from His people is “an expression of Divine displeasure (see **Psalm 30:7; Isaiah 54:8; 57:17**).” (P. 1282)

2131

Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase “all of them” “is a hyperbolic expression. What it means is that a great number of them perished.” (P. 264) Would you call this an instance of a biblical author's committing the “all fallacy”?

(continued...)

39:24 כְּטִמְאַתָּם וְכַפְשֵׁיהֶם

According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions,²¹³²

עָשִׂיתִי אִתָּם

I did / worked / dealt with them,

וְאַסְתֵּר פְּנֵי מַהֵם:

and I hid My face from them.²¹³³

39:25²¹³⁴

²¹³¹(...continued)

Hilmer comments on **verses 22-23** with their statements that “the house of Israel will know...And the nations will know,” that “As [YHWH] had made Himself known to Israel and the nations through His saving acts in Israel’s behalf (see **Exodus 6:7; 7:5, 17; 10:2; 14:18; 16:6-7, 12; Joshua 3:10; 4:24**; compare **Joshua 2:9-11; 5:1**), so now Israel and the nations will see Him again at work as He judges His people for their sin (see **verse 27**).” (P. 1282)

We say, So now Israel and the nations will see Him again at work as He overthrows Gog, and as He deliver His people from Gog’s oppression.” What do you think?

²¹³²

Hilmer notes that “their uncleanness and their offenses” have been “spelled out especially in **chapter 22**, but also throughout **chapters 6-24**.” (P. 1282) Yes, Ezekiel has been unrelenting in his depictions of Judah’s sins! It is not for nothing that he has been characterized as a “prophet of doom.” But the prophet of doom is at the same time a great prophet of hope, as we have seen especially in **chapters 36 and 37**!

²¹³³

Darr states that “**Verse 24** further asserts the justice of God’s judgment upon Yahweh’s Own people. They got what they deserved while the Lord’s Face was hidden from them.” (P. 364)

²¹³⁴

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 25-29** “Final Reassurance of Israel’s Redemption.”

Reimer comments that “The final element of the oracle attends now to Israel rather than to Gog. These brief verses echo many of the restoration passages in **chapters 34-37**, including the themes of renewal for the whole house of Israel (**39:25**), the turning away from previous treachery (**verse 26**), and the gathering and return of those once scattered (**verses 27-28**).” (P. 1563)

(continued...)

לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

עַתָּה אָשִׁיב אֶת־[שְׁבוּת] יַעֲקֹב

Now²¹³⁵ I will return Jacob's²¹³⁶ captivity;²¹³⁷

²¹³⁴(...continued)

Matties comments that “The focus is on the present as [YHWH] intends to restore Israel’s fortunes (see also **16:53-58; 29:14**), depicted here as a reversal of judgment. Two motives are identified: mercy (the only positive use of the Hebrew word רַחֵם, **racham** in **Ezekiel**) and passion for the Divine name (**verse 25**)...Similar in context and content to **16:54, verse 26a** should read ‘bear their shame’ (see also **32:24-25, 30; 34:29; 36:6-7, 15; 44:13**)...

“Restoration means that Israel has become aware of its complicity with evil (**verse 26**) and, at the same time, becomes the instrument through which [YHWH’s] holiness is displayed among the nations (**verse 27**)...

“The exilic audience is addressed; not a single person will be left behind (**verse 28**). Never again will [YHWH’s] face be hidden (**verse 29a**; see also **verse 23**). And instead of pouring out wrath (see also **7:8; 9:8; 20:8; 20:15; 36:18**), [YHWH] pours out ‘My Spirit’ (see also **Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 32:15; 44:1-5**), which is both a sealing of the renewed covenant and a promise of Divine Presence and peace. Gog and the likes of him will never again threaten or inspire fear in [YHWH’s] people.” (P. 1215)

2135

Rabbi Fisch comments on the word “Now,” that “The decree of punishment for Israel’s sins having been fulfilled, a new and happy era will be inaugurated for the nation.” (P. 264)

2136

Hilmer notes that here “Jacob” is a name for “the nation of Israel, as in **Ezekiel 20:5**. The parallelism within the verse supports this identity.” (P. 1282)

2137

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” שְׁבוּת; and second, the qere, “to be read,” שְׁבוּת, “captivity.” This is a correction of a mis-spelled word in the original Hebrew text.

(continued...)

וְרַחֲמֵתִי כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

and I will have compassion upon Israel's house;

וְקִנְיָתִי לְשֵׁם קְדָשִׁי:

and I will be zealous / jealous for My set-apart Name!²¹³⁸

39:26 וְנָשׂוּ אֶת-כָּל־מִתְּם

And they shall take up / carry / forgive their reproach,²¹³⁹

וְאֶת-כָּל־מַעַלְמֵם אֲשֶׁר מָעְלוּ-בִּי

and all their faithlessness which they practiced against Me,

²¹³⁷(...continued)

See end-note 7, YHWH As Returner of Captivities and Restorer of Fortunes.

2138

See **Ezekiel 38:19**,

וּבְקִנְיָתִי בְּאֵשׁ-עֲבָרְתִּי דִבַּרְתִּי

And in My jealousy, with (the) fire of My fury, I have spoken:

אִם-לֹא בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה

There will be on that day

רָעַשׁ גָּדוֹל עַל אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

a great shaking / earthquake upon / in Israel-land!

2139

This first line of **verse 26** has been given varying translations:

King James, “After that they have borne their shame”;

Tanakh, “They will bear their shame”;

New Revised Standard, “They shall forget their shame”; **New International** and **New Jerusalem**, similar;

Rahfs, καὶ λήμψονται τὴν ἀτιμίαν ἑαυτῶν, “And they shall receive their dishonor...”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Settled securely in his land and enjoying in abundance [YHWH's] blessing, Israel will feel deeply ashamed of his evil past.” (P. 264)

Hilmer's translation has “they will forget their shame,” and he comments that “The remembrance of shame previously called for (**6:9; 20:43; 36:31**) is here erased.” (P. 1282) We say, Perhaps...but the translation of the text is very ambiguous.

בְּשִׁבְתָם עַל־אֲדָמָתָם לְבֶטַח

when they dwelled upon their ground / land for the security / securely,

וְאִין מִחֲרִיד:

and there was no one causing fear--

39:27 בְּשׁוּבְכִי אוֹתָם מִן־הָעַמִּים

when I bring them back from the peoples.²¹⁴⁰

וְקִבַצְתִּי אֹתָם מֵאֲרָצוֹת אֹיְבֵיהֶם

And I will gather them from (the) lands of their enemies;

וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בָם

and I will be made Set-Apart by them²¹⁴¹

לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם רַבִּים:

to / in (the) eyes of the many nations!

39:28 וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

And they will know that I (am) YHWH their God,

בְּהִגְלוֹתִי אֹתָם אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם

when I took them into exile to the nations;

2140

Rabbi Fisch states that “This verse is to be connected with the preceding: none shall make them afraid, when I have brought them back.” (P. 264)

2141

See **verse 7**. Hilmer’s translation is “I will show Myself holy through them.” He comments that “[YHWH] will reveal Himself anew in a restored, holy people (compare **20:41; 28:25; 36:23**).” Yes... but Ezekiel has shown that YHWH reveals Himself not only when He restores His people, but also when He punishes them, and sends them into captivity, because of their sinfulness. If you want to see the nature of YHWH, see His work in both judgment and grace, in punishment and blessing, in sending His people into captivity, and in restoring them from captivity. It takes all these actions to understand the nature of YHWH. If we don’t take them all into consideration, we will get a distorted picture of the Divine nature!

וְכִנְסֹתִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם

and I gathered them upon their ground;

וְלֹא־אוֹתִיר עוֹד מֵהֶם שָׁם:

and I will not leave remaining any longer, anyone from them there.²¹⁴²

39:29 וְלֹא־אֶסְתִּיר עוֹד פְּנֵי מֵהֶם

And I will not again hide My face from them,²¹⁴³

אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַכְתִּי אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

when I (will have) poured out My Spirit upon Israel's household—²¹⁴⁴

2142

Rabbi Fisch comments that “[YHWH’s] dealings with Israel will bring home to the nations that He reveals Himself in history no less than in Nature, and there is a Divine plan in human affairs which gradually unfolds itself in time.” (P. 264)

2143

Rabbi Fisch notes that the Targum states, “My Divine Presence will never again leave them.” (P. 265)

Reimer comments that “[YHWH’s] promise ‘I will not hide My face’ ensures that the abandonment reviewed in **verses 23-24** is consigned to the past. As in **Ezekiel 37:1-14**, this final renewal coincides with the outpouring of My Spirit.” (P. 1563) Compare **Isaiah 54:8**,

בְּשַׁעַף קֶצֶף

In a flood of wrath

הִסְתַּרְתִּי פְּנֵי

I hid My face--

רְגַע מִמֶּנִּי

(for) a moment from you.

וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם

but / and with long-lasting steadfast-love

רַחֲמֵיךָ

I had compassion on you!

2144

(continued...)

²¹⁴⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Some Jewish commentators explain that in the Messianic age the spirit of prophecy will be restored to Israel; others that under the benign influence of [YHWH’s] Spirit, the nation will not again lapse into evil and so the redeemed state of Israel will endure.” (P. 265)

Hilmer comments that the Divine promise “I will pour out My Spirit” is “the gift of [YHWH’s] enabling Spirit (see **11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14**).” (P. 1282)

Darr comments that “**Verses 28-29** consist of a much elaborated recognition formula. The nations will know that Yahweh is Israel’s God, Who sent ‘His’ people into exile (on account of their sinfulness; see, most recently, **39:24**) but Who then (re)gathered them to their homeland, leaving nary a soul behind...(The last two statements of **verse 28** do not appear in the **Septuagint**.) The reader who is familiar with **Deuteronomy 4** will discern in **verse 28** the fulfillment of God’s ancient promise that after the people are exiled, they will return to Yahweh their God and be obedient: ‘In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the Lord your God, and heed Him. Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will neither abandon you nor destroy you; He will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that He swore to them.’ (**Verses 30-31 NRSV**; see also **Leviticus 26:44-45**)...

“**Verse 29** expresses Yahweh’s commitment never again to hide the Divine Face from God’s people (see **verses 23-24**). Transforming the phrase ‘I will pour out My wrath’ that has occurred so often in the **Ezekiel Scroll (7:8; 9:8; 20:8, 13, 21, 33, 34, etc.)** Yahweh promises to ‘pour out My Spirit upon the house of Israel.’” (Pp. 365-366) This is a powerful note of grace at the close of **Ezekiel 39!**

As Darr reflects on **chapters 38-39**, she states that “Ezekiel’s salvation oracles, including the Gog of Magog passage, fueled the hopes of the exiles that Yahweh would indeed intervene in history to bring about the conditions the priest-prophet described—if not for their sakes, then for the sake of the Divine reputation, which had been sullied among the nations with Judah’s collapse and the exiles’ forced residency in Babylonia (see, e.g., **Ezekiel 36:22-32**). The Gog of Magog passage speaks about the distant future, but it speaks to the diaspora community about issues most crucial to it, including the desire to be reunited with Yahweh in covenant fidelity. The ancient reader, who knows that God’s battle to end all battles has not yet transpired, also awaits the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s oracle. So does the Christian author of **Revelation 19-20**, who anticipates that following a thousand years of Messianic rule, Satan will deceive ‘the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog’ (now two distinct entities), and bring them against ‘the camp of the saints’ and ‘the beloved city’ (Jerusalem) where they will be consumed by fire descending from heaven.

“Modern readers, no less than their ancient counterparts, long for security. We want to believe that good will triumph over evil—said theologically, that God will intervene in human history to reward the righteous and to punish the wicked. The Gog of Magog passage is, within the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, the
(continued...)

²¹⁴⁴(...continued)

ultimate expression of that longing. Jacob's descendants fell beneath the deadly blows of foes from the north. The prophet Isaiah described the Assyrian army as 'smoke coming from the north,' and the Northern Kingdom was defeated by that army in 721 B.C.E. The prophet Jeremiah identified the foe from the north as Nebuchadrezzar's forces, and the Southern Kingdom was defeated by that army in 587 B.C.E. (**Jeremiah 25:8-14**). But, **chapters 38-39** present Yahweh's battle with Gog and his hordes in the conclusive victory which eliminates forever the threat posed by foes from the north—indeed, according to **Ezekiel 38:5-6**, from the totality of the earth's evil and aggressive forces.

“Gog of Magog is the supreme (incomparably evil) enemy. Although the attack against the land of Israel which he spearheads is initiated by Yahweh alone, the text in its canonical form dehumanizes Gog (he is hooked through the jaws like an animal). Indeed, Gog is more caricature than character. The only human personality traits ascribed to him are avarice and a concomitant desire to assail an ostensibly unprotected people (**38:10-12**). Nowhere does this material invite its readers to consider Gog and his hordes as fellow human beings. In fact, the very notion that one might do so seems, on the surface, patently absurd.

“Yet at a time when we are forced increasingly to recognize the importance of profound respect and cooperation among the nations sharing this tiny planet, biblical oracles which suggest that the solution to a people's (any people's) problems is the extermination of its enemies are extremely problematic. Even more difficult is the idea that God would, for the sake of self-vindication, deliberately drag Gog to the battlefield and utterly exterminate him and his forces. To be sure, the text speaks also of Yahweh's compassion for, and covenant loyalty to, God's people. But to the extent that Ezekiel depicts Yahweh as a Deity Who resolves problems by means of massacre, he turns God into a negative role model for people with problems of their own.” (Pp. 366-367)

What do you think? Do you agree with Darr? I do not.

I sense that somehow Darr is missing the point of these two chapters. The Israelites are not being depicted as the “good” people over against the “bad” Gog. They are the people whose sins and failures Ezekiel has constantly pointed out in his Scroll—but they are not the kind of evil people being depicted by Gog. The Divine judgment isn't being depicted as a matter of God's blessing the good people, and exterminating the bad people. If so, God would have to exterminate the Israelites. At the same time, there are “Gogs” in human history— we say, “Hitlers,” who are determined on wiping out entire nations like Israel. Perhaps the story of Gog is meant to assure us that even though we are sinful people, God will see to it that the Hitlers will be destroyed, will come to nothing. This is not a matter of “resolving problems by means of massacre,” but rather a matter of stopping madmen like Gog and Hitler from the genocide of entire peoples. When madmen like Gog and Hitler are running loose, ruthlessly destroying innumerable people (both “good” and “bad”), it isn't time to begin considering Gog and Hitler as “fellow human beings,” but time to stop them in their tracks. And stopping the Hitlers and the Gogs in their tracks is not the same as destroying all of Israel's enemies. Israel had many enemies, including the

(continued...)

נֵאֻם אֶלַי יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

²¹⁴⁴(...continued)

Philistines and the Syrians nearby, and the Assyrians and the Babylonians further away. God's destroying Gog was not the same as destroying all of these.

I myself am known as a pacifist—I hate war, and what it does to people. I grew up in the Second World War, and had my two cousins / brothers go to war in the South Pacific, and remember our family's constant fear that any day we would receive notice of their deaths. But I also know that there are times when pacifism has to take up arms to stop crazed dictators like Hitler and the Japanese war-machine—not a time to destroy all our enemies—but to stop the hate-filled murderers like Hitler. And we are reminded by the **Scroll of Revelation** that even though Christ may reign over the nations for a thousand years, there will still be evil forces—Gogs and Devils and Hitlers--that have to be dealt with in lakes of fire. What do you think?

What an important issue to discuss openly and honestly!

